

1. Collins-Robinson House
2. 56 Oakland Avenue
Mobile, Mobile County
Alabama
3. Miss Charlotte Marston Robinson
56 Oakland Avenue
Mobile, Alabama
4. lot 3 in e $\frac{1}{2}$ of sw $\frac{1}{4}$ of S14, lot #9
in Block i, Martson Place Subdivision
5. Irregularly shaped lot on northeast corner of Marston Lane and Oakland Ave. See attached map.

Acreage: .8 UTM 16 389/670 3396/170

6. Late 1830s or early 1840s. Enlarged 1889. Restored 1971.

7. Description: The 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ story frame cottage is located well back on its tree shaded lot. It faces to the south and is approached by a drive that circles around a central garden plot. The house is raised on a foundation about 6 feet high with the space between the piers sealed with windows set in the brick infilling. There is a shallow rear wing that was enlarged in 1970 to provide an extra bedroom and bath. At the same time the back area was excavated to provide a garage and utility room under the house. The gable roof that has its ridge running parallel to the street is pierced by two dormers covered with low hip roofs. The 5 bay porch that extends the full width of the cottage is supported by simple, slightly tapered columns of square section, with a molding for the capitals and no bases. The top railing of the balustrade is slightly curved and the balusters are of square section. The balustrade continues down the sides of the 11 stepped stairway. According to family tradition the original stairway was not centrally located but led up to the porch deck from the ends. There is no present evidence for this. The main entrance leading into the hall, has simple framing surrounding a two leaf door of which each leaf has 2 large panels, one above the other. There is no transom, nor sidelights. Double french doors lead into the side parlors. The windows on the east and west side are of casement type, those in the attic and rear wing are double sash, 6/6. The two exterior end chimneys stood free from the wall above the fireplace level until the hurricane damage of 1979 made it necessary to infill the crack between the stack and the wall.

The interior plan of the main cottage consists of two large square rooms on either side of the central hall. The wall between the 2 front and the 2 rear rooms is double the width of the other partition walls bearing out the fact that the original cottage had only 2 rooms and the hall with the 2 other rooms added in 1889 as stated in the contract in the possession of the present owner. According to the family records, these two rooms served as the bedrooms with separate buildings for dining, for a kitchen and some half dozen guest cottages. In 1889 the house was enlarged by the two extra rooms making it a full residence. The interior detailing is simple, no crown moldings, no ceiling medallions, simple wood mantels. There is a narrow, steep enclosed stairway at right angles to the main hall, that rises at the rear of the back west room.

Collins-Robinson House, 56 Oakland Avenue

SIGNIFICANCE

Architecture:

The Collins-Robinson House is both an early and interesting example of a raised 1½ story Gulf Coast cottage. Although the building exhibits some classical influence in the central hall plan and the square Tuscan posts along the porch, the overall design of the building is simple and restrained. Unusual features are the two sets of French doors located to either side of the main entrance door and the casement windows on the ground floor which were not common to Mobile but were found in early French Creole houses of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

It has been suggested by documentary materials that the house actually began as a two room house lacking a central entrance. Access to the rooms was through doors leading directly onto the front porch--a feature which follows the earliest Gulf Coast cottage tradition. These two rooms served as bedrooms with separate buildings for dining, kitchen and guest houses. In 1889 two more rooms were added and a central hall created. The building illustrates very well the growth and adaptation of a summer home to a full time residence.

Typical of a summer home, interior detailing is simple with no crown molding or ceiling medallions. Wood mantels are also simple.

Integrity:

The rear additions and dormers have not altered significantly the basic integrity of the building. The basic form and features of the cottage are intact.

* * * *

This house was constructed by the same Collins family that owned the house at 4703 Old Shell Road. In 1840 Joshua Collins sold lots 3 and 4 of his 80 acre tract to Jacob Collins for \$1,000.00. It cannot be proven that the house was on the lot at this time but it was there in 1843 when Jacob sold to Hiram Griffing. Griffing is reported living there in the City Directories of that year. After passing through several hands, the property was purchased by John and Elizabeth Marston in 1870. The Marstons, according to their descendant, the present owner, continued to use the home as a summer retreat until they enlarged it in 1889. Miss Robinson's stories of her grandparents' summer exodus via horse and wagon to their summer home provide an understanding of the social patterns of the day when long summer months were spent in the country while the winter season from November to April was spent in town. Guests were entertained at the house for weeks at a time. With the 20th century expansion of Spring Hill, there is no evidence of these early outbuildings which remains.

Robinson
62-28-30 4-3
lot 40

Block 2, lot 40

