

Historical Summary

#1

The Driskell-Martin House represents the affluence obtained in the antebellum period by its owner, Thomas Sanford Driskell, a planter and a merchant. A native of Virginia, he came to Alabama with his father-in-law, Davis McGee (#1). He and his wife, Emily, the eldest of McGee's daughters, first lived in a two-room cabin behind the site of the present house. The land had been patented from the public lands in 1832 by Ferrel Gorman. Driskell's store was on the corner of First Avenue and Cherry Streets, the present site of a brick store now owned by the Martin family. Annually Driskell went by horseback to Charleston to buy merchandise, which was then shipped to the port of Mobile, went by steamer up the Alabama River to Selma and then over land by wagon. The quality of his residence indicates familiarity with the architectural fashions of the day. The house was built by carpenters Nelson Mitchell, Massena Godwin, and others. The interior plaster work is said to have been executed by French craftsmen. As the finest residence in Plantersville, it was commandeered by General Alison for Federal headquarters. This may have prevented its destruction. Major General Wilson occupied the house as his cavalry fought from Ebenezer Church, in Stanton, to Selma in April 1865. After 65 years of Driskell ownership, the mansion was purchased by Dr. Thomas Munroe Martin in 1915. Today it is the home of his son and his family.

In various manuscripts there have been several spellings of this name. Driskell is preferred as that is the spelling used by E. E. Todd, a grandson, in his manuscript and the spelling to be found carved in a joist of the house.