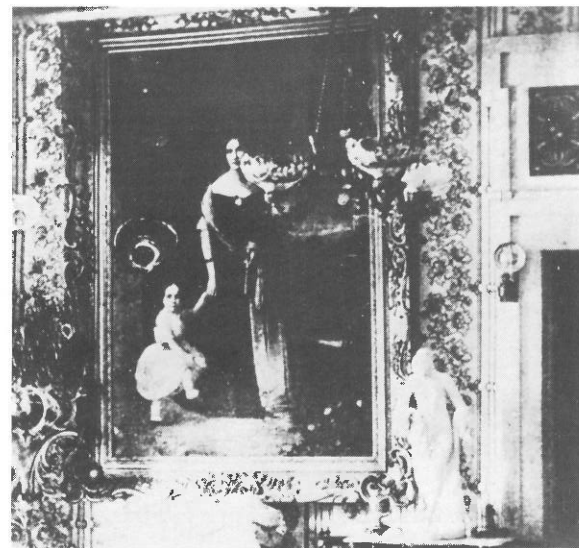
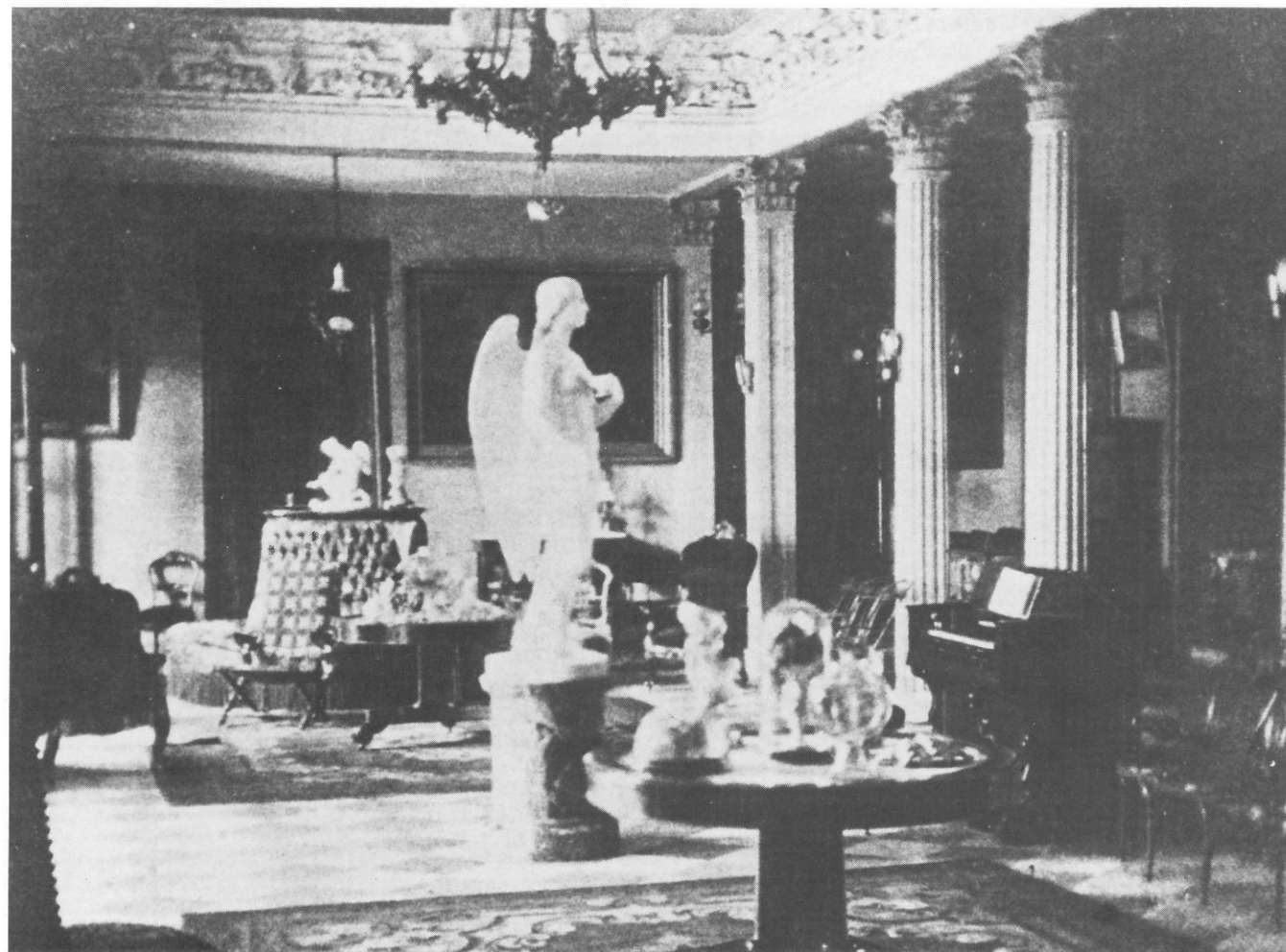


Front hall with statue of *Ruth Gleaning*.



Front hall with portrait of Adelia Acklen and child by Bush.



Grand salon with statue of *The Peri*.

Three interior photographs by Giers of Belmont Mansion in the period after the Civil War.

Her father's will stated that, since she already possessed a large fortune, she desired that her share of the estate go to her brothers and sisters. She reached the height of social success but never forgot family ties. After her trip to Europe, she wrote her mother from Newport, "... I would not give one week of the society of true friends and dear kindred for years of the heartless and gay life of such a metropolis as Paris." Her correspondence shows her as a mother solicitous for the welfare of her children. When her twin daughters, Laura and Corinne, died in 1855, her letter to Mrs. John Heiss fully expressed the heart cry of a mother who lost two of her dearest possessions.

Her Presbyterian training remained with her through life. Although she would serve guests wine, she herself was generally abstemious. She attended balls and the opera, but she was critical of the theater. In a letter from Paris, she assured her mother that her tastes were different from the standards of that city. Her religious profession was more than nominal. Particularly in times of crisis, her letters reveal a faith in divine Providence. She was a supporting member of the First Presbyterian Church of Nashville, then located downtown. She sat in pew number 135, today designated by a plaque with her name. In 1867 she presented to her church a bell, costing \$3,000, which was rung at her death and which still hangs in the belfry of the Downtown Presbyterian Church, whose congregation owns the building which formerly belonged to the First Presbyterian Church. She presented to Moore Memorial Chapel, another Presbyterian congregation, a plantation bell from Louisiana.

She was not known for any great philanthropy, such as the bequest of her first husband for a school. But W. W. Clayton, in his *History of Davidson County*, referred in 1880 to her "liberal donations to benevolent purposes," and in the eulogy at her funeral the officiating minister spoke of her many "deeds of kindness and of self-sacrifice wrought in his name and for his sake, that the public eye has never seen." In her carriage she often took baskets of flowers for friends or the sick with the remark, "What is the use of having beautiful things if we cannot share them with others." According to a letter of May 8, 1874, from George W. Shields to her manager at Angola in Louisiana, even though at the time she was facing financial problems on her Louisiana plantations, Adelia was willing to keep all workers who would labor, even individuals she could not profitably use, to keep them from destitution.

As a Victorian, she was conscious of elevating the mind and spirit. At Belmont Mansion it was the custom at breakfast not only to say grace but also to require each person, guests excepted unless otherwise willing, to contribute some historical or scientific bit of information which was then used for further conversation during the

meal. On New Year's Day good wishes for the coming year, which had been placed in a small tin container the day before, were read. Adelia always had a sense of proper decorum. When the guests at the reception for the Association for the Advancement of Science went in the bedrooms, she thought it in bad taste.

Adelia was able to sustain her lifestyle in the post-war period, at least in part, because of her control of the Louisiana plantations. Although the slaves were freed, many of them returned as tenant farmers. In managing her plantations, she depended on agents and in Nashville used the services of her brother-in-law, George W. Shields. Her two oldest sons, Joseph and William, had received a large share of the plantations by inheritance from their half-sister, Emma Franklin, but Adelia, writing in a letter in December, 1871, recorded that she had settled without recourse to the courts her difficulties with Joseph by purchasing his share of the plantations. Joseph's father-in-law, Colonel Pinckney C. Bethell, gave him Avalon, a sugar plantation in Louisiana. She now undertook complete responsibility for her own business affairs. On one of her returns to the plantations after a long absence, the tenants received her as if she were a reigning queen and because of her presence and personal interest worked more eagerly.

But the times were not easy in Louisiana. During Reconstruction Louisiana faced great political and economic difficulties. In early 1872 Adelia complained in a letter that "These Radicals are ruining the state" and that she was required to pay \$8,000 in taxes on her lands, even on those not in cultivation. She found that it was difficult to manage her estates through agents and could not maintain, as in the antebellum period, the drainage system and levees. On December 22, 1880, Adelia and her son, William, sold the Louisiana plantations to Samuel Lawrence James and Louis Trager for \$100,000, paid in sixteen notes at 8% interest. James held the lease for convict labor from the State of Louisiana. William received one-third of the sale price, and Adelia in her will assigned equal shares of the remaining two-thirds to her son, Claude, and her daughter, Pauline. In 1901 Louisiana paid the heirs of James \$200,000 for the property for a penitentiary, in 1922 adding 10,000 acres to the original 8,000.

By the time she had made her will Adelia had disposed of her lands not only in Louisiana but also in Texas. She had sold Fairvue in 1882. But she was still not ready for retirement, even though she was in her late sixties. According to a letter of April, 1885, she spent a winter with relatives in Orlando, Florida, where she bought lots with the possibility of building a winter home. Her main attention, however, was directed towards Washington, D.C. Even though her son, Joseph, had returned to Nashville, she showed her independence by moving in 1885 with her daughter, Pauline, to