

to some accounts, Isaac Franklin was not at home when Hayes and the Whites called, so they were asked to sign the guest register, and here the “legend” takes on a life of its own. According to one source, when Hayes expressed her disappointment at missing Franklin, the butler responded she would not have “caught” him anyway, causing Hayes to inscribe next to her name, “I like this house. I’d like to meet the owner.”²⁸ A more recent source omits discussion of the butler altogether, crediting a bold Adelia Hayes with writing after her name, “I like this house and set my cap for its master.”²⁹ As the Fairvue guest register is lost to history, Hayes’s inscription—if she left one at all—will never be known, though it is highly unlikely she left either of the messages noted above, both of which were inappropriate at the time for a woman of her standing. In her son William Hayes Ackland’s telling of the tale, Franklin was at Fairvue on the day in question, and offered his visitors a personally-guided tour of the house. Ackland’s³⁰ version may hold more validity than some of the others as he no doubt heard his mother retell the story at various times throughout his life. To continue, when the house tour reached the drawing room, Franklin asked “if he might not hear a song,” as was customary for the time, and Hayes with “a voice of remarkable sweetness” according to her son, sang the popular “Buds and Flowers.” Apparently, that was all it took and the “old bachelor’s heart... capitulated at once.”³¹ Whether it was the sweet voice, bold message, or some combi-

nation of these qualities, this event appears to be the beginning of the romance that led, on July 1, 1839, to the marriage of Isaac Franklin and Adelia Hayes, solemnized by J.T. Edgar, pastor at Nashville’s First Presbyterian Church.³²

Isaac Franklin was an intriguing “love interest” choice for Hayes, now Adelia Franklin. He did number among the most eligible bachelors in Middle Tennessee, perhaps in the South, in the 1830s, but he and Gibbs could not have been more different, which makes the relationship all the more interesting. Where Gibbs was Hayes’s contemporary in terms of age and education, at the time of their eventual meeting Franklin was in his late forties to Hayes’s early twenties and had the benefit of only the most rudimentary education. An attractive man with dark hair and eyes, evidenced by surviving portraits, he was very wealthy and in addition to the 2,000-acre Sumner County, Tennessee, property which housed Fairvue, owned close to 8,000 acres planted in cotton in Louisiana’s West Feliciana Parish, as well as property in Mississippi and Texas. While his wealth, and the promise of the life she would enjoy as Mrs. Franklin, may have aided in Hayes’s decision to accept Franklin’s marriage proposal, he must have possessed other qualities that appealed to her. Those, of course, and her thoughts on the matter are also lost to history.

After a honeymoon lasting most of the summer, and visits to the Atlantic seaboard and other locations, the Franklins returned to Fairvue and began their married life in



In 1837, Adelia Hayes met Isaac Franklin, owner of magnificent Fairvue in Sumner County. They married in 1839; Franklin likely added the wing to the right at the time of their marriage. (HABS, 1936, Library of Congress)

late 1839.³³ While the house itself was spectacular, described by Caroline Seeborn and Peter Woloszynski in *Under Live Oaks, The Last Great Houses of the Old South* as “a two-story brick structure with Georgian and Greek Revival flourishes,” and “Irish Kilkenny marble mantels and furnishing from New Orleans,”³⁴ it was located in rural Sumner County, a good distance from the bustling activity of Nashville, and

it likely took Adelia Franklin some time to become accustomed to the slower pace of rural life.

A bit about Isaac Franklin is important here—his beginnings, his business interests, his accumulation of wealth—for without Franklin, Adelia would not have acquired such vast resources and her life would certainly have taken very different turns. Isaac Franklin’s ties to Middle Tennessee date