



Adelicia Acklen died in 1887 and was entombed in the Acklen vault with her first two husbands and her children. Her statue, *The Peri*, was moved from Belmont's Grand Salon to the vault. (Tennessee Historical Society)

on Wednesdays from three to five O'clock at their home, 5 Iowa Circle,"¹⁶³ the *Evening Star* reported in late December of 1885. In an interesting show of independence, or perhaps restlessness, and maybe boredom, Adelicia left her life-long Tennessee home, re-established herself in the nation's capital, and soon became a part its society circle. In doing so, though, she also left behind William Cheatham, and while the couple

never divorced, Adelicia Cheatham's move renews questions as to why she opted for this marriage in the first place. Cheatham sold Belmont and its acreage in 1887, and most of her other Nashville properties, and with construction of her new Washington, D.C., home well underway, she and Pauline Acklen traveled to New York to select and purchase its furniture and finishing accessories. While there, Adelicia Cheatham devel-

oped such a severe case of pneumonia, the *Evening Star* reported "members of her family in Washington have been telegraphed to go to her."¹⁶⁴ After a brief rebound, her health declined rapidly, and on the evening of May 4, 1887, at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, Adelicia Hayes Franklin Acklen Cheatham died.¹⁶⁵ Her remains were transported to Nashville and her funeral held at the First Presbyterian Church. Construction on the Acklen vault in Mount Olivet Cemetery was completed in 1884, and there Adelicia was laid to her final rest with members of her immediate family.¹⁶⁶

"I wish there had been a visitor's Book at Belmont for no celebrity who visited Nashville left Belmont unvisited,"¹⁶⁷ William Ackland wrote years after the sale of the home where he spent his youth. A visitor's book, a diary or two, a more extensive collection of letters—the things of which historians and researchers dream—any of these would help develop the picture of the woman sketched in this essay. With the information provided here though, as spotty as it is, that image begins to come into clearer focus. Adelicia Acklen was an elite, wealthy, white woman living in the antebellum South, to those points there is no argument. But she was also a wife, a mother, a daughter, and a sister who loved her family, celebrated their joys, and suffered their sorrows. She was an astute businesswoman who understood the well-being of hundreds of individuals depended on her, at wartime and in peace, and was determined to provide it. And she was a patroness of the city

she loved, although she was often unappreciated and misunderstood by many of its citizens. Adelicia Acklen, as revealed here, is an ideal example of nineteenth-century Southern white womanhood. She should be appreciated for the contributions she made to the history of Nashville and the South, and remembered for far more than the big pink house on the hill.

1. Anita Shafer Goodstein, *Nashville, 1780–1860: From Frontier to City*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1989, 24.

2. "Williamson County Genealogy and History," www.genealogytrails.com/tenn/williamson/history/goodspeeds.html, accessed February 23, 2011.

3. "Yesterday Nashville," *The Nashville American*, August 15, 1909.

4. Ancestry.com. *Tennessee State Marriages, 1780–2002* [database on-line], accessed July 16, 2016.

5. Numerous sources discuss the establishment of Nashville and its environs, among them are: Alfred Leland Crabb, *Nashville: Personality of a City* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1960); Goodstein, *Nashville, 1780–1860: From Frontier to City*; Nashville-Gallatin Interurban Railway, *The Historic Blue Grass Line: A Review of the History of Davidson and Sumner Counties, together with Sketches of Places and Events along the Route of the Nashville-Gallatin Interurban Railway* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1913); Edward Albright, *Early History of Middle Tennessee* (Nashville: Brandon Printing Company, 1909); Charles E. Robert, *Nashville and Her Trade for 1870* (Nashville: Roberts & Purvis, 1870); A.W. Putnam, Esq., *History of Middle Tennessee; or, Life and Times of Gen. James Robertson* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1859); Paul H. Bergeron, Stephen V. Ash, and Jeanette Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999);