

commodity produced prior to the Civil War, cotton. The rise and fall of market conditions dictated the continued development or stagnation of numerous southern farms and estates from 1820 to 1860. Joseph Acklen had a propensity for investing his wife's money well. The growth of the Acklen fortune was fostered by an expanding worldwide market desperate for bale after bale of American cotton. Few economic events adversely influenced the soundness of cotton prices worldwide. Not even the "Panic of 1857," as it swept across the United States, causing bank failures and the closure of railroads, came close to having an effect on cotton prices.

Planters in the south proceeded as if economic conditions fostering their lifestyles would continue forever. Cotton was more than king in the 1850s. As world markets expanded it appeared southern planters were not able to produce enough product to meet those demands. The Acklens were perfect examples of this phenomenon, endorsed as they were by increasing financial advantages. It must have appeared to Joseph and Adelia as if the money would never stop in those halcyon days prior to the outbreak of war. Their lifestyle, including purchases of rosewood furniture, artworks, and numerous building projects certainly appear to have reflected this attitude.

Were the Acklens not the central characters in this history and we concentrated only upon Belmont Mansion's construction, the entire spectrum of an

expansive southern economy would still be spread before us. From foundation to roof, from one wing to another, each and every architectural element is an illustration of having more money than the majority of Americans would have seen in ten lifetimes.

Surviving documents tell the story of extraordinary profits produced in Louisiana year after year, amounting to upwards of \$118,000 per annum.³¹ Adjusting for inflation, the same amount would be \$3,551,422.52 today, all without having to pay income tax.³² It is no wonder Belmont was continuously expanded and improved during this period. At some point the question surfaced for the Acklens of how and where to spend the money. Much of what they expended in the 1850s, short of increasing land holdings in Louisiana, led to the further development of their Belmont estate.

Americans of this era were an interesting lot, fiercely independent of foreign states, but possessing a slavish devotion to cultures left behind. Attitudes, coupled with a sense of entrepreneurship, led people to believe they too could live in palace-like surroundings. Throughout history the accumulation of wealth has continuously propelled individuals to a higher social status. Belmont became an attraction for visitors of a certain distinction for whom the doors were always open. The social ambition of one partner in the Acklen marriage was balanced

by an interest in politics and business by the other.³³ Belmont became the perfect stage from which to launch these personal objectives.

However, by the late 1850s these goals were problematic, for Belmont lacked a substantial space in which to entertain. Elevated numbers of guests were not a major consideration in the fortune building years of the early 1850s. An oversized opulent space was now required, as suddenly the house became too small. Certainly, not too small in which to live, but too small for activities required in order to further their personal success. The time was right it seemed to expand once again.

Moving forward with another expansion required a perfect plan, for Belmont had already been expanded in every direction possible, or so it seemed at the beginning of 1859. To solve this quandary a fashionable local architect was consulted. Adolphus Heiman, born in Prussia, was conversant in the latest, most up to date styles of architecture. Adelia Acklen and Heiman first crossed paths with the death of Isaac Franklin in 1849. Heiman had been involved in the construction of an Egyptian Revival style mausoleum at Fairvue, in which Franklin and his children were buried.

Since that time Heiman's career exploded, considering the lengthy roster of structures with which he is known to have been associated. Churches, hospitals, university structures, commercial build-

ings, a bridge crossing the Cumberland, a theater, a Masonic Hall, Nashville City Hall, the Giles County Courthouse, and numerous private homes were part of his contribution to Tennessee's antebellum architecture. By September of 1850 *The Daily Evening Reporter* said of Heiman he was "so well known that a word of praise would be superfluous."³⁴ Heiman, to the pleasure of his clients, worked in several popular styles of the day, Greek Revival, Gothic, or Italianate coupled with an ever present hint of Classicism.

The Acklens turned to Heiman in 1859 to design what was to become the final addition to Belmont. It was decided to enclose a portion of the U-shaped courtyard to the rear, thereby creating a much needed entertainment space. Complications with this plan would have been apparent from the very beginning. The life enhancing rear gallery, the heart and soul of early Belmont, would be lost by this solution, in combination with the upper gallery as well. Enclosure of these galleries would preclude the movement of cooling air to the interior. A splendid view of the city below would disappear with the construction of a new rear wall. A reworking of the gallery would also entail redesign of the 1853 stairs.

Heiman's design found solutions for all concerns in a deft and balanced manner. Primarily, there was no better place for the new entertaining space than at the base of the u-shaped house formed by the gallery and the wings. As constructed the