



Belmont's front hall featured a portrait of Adelia Franklin holding the hand of her daughter Emma, who died in 1855. The sculpture *Sleeping Children* was placed in front of the portrait, poignantly memorializing her children's deaths. (C.C. Giers, photographer, ca. 1867, Belmont Mansion Association)

acknowledged. By the outbreak of the Civil War, the Acklens owned about 691 slaves, many of them working the cotton fields in Louisiana. It was well understood in their day (as it is today) that the Acklen wealth was supplied by their Louisiana slaves. As Mother Frances Walsh wrote, "Louisiana plantations worked by numerous slaves were rich mines affording ample means to gratify fastidious tastes and princely extravagance."<sup>40</sup> Joseph Acklen's final letter home was written August 20, 1863. He died shortly thereafter on September 11 of an unknown illness, perhaps pneumonia or malaria.

Nineteenth-century parents regularly commissioned posthumous portraits of their children. Unfortunately, Adelia Acklen found too many opportunities to participate in this tradition, as six of her ten children died by age eleven. From her first marriage to Isaac Franklin, she had four children, three of whom survived infancy. However, she lost her four and six-year-old daughters to illness just weeks after Franklin had died, leaving her widowed with her daughter Emma, who was just a year and a half old. In her second marriage, she had six children, four of whom survived into adulthood, although she lost her two-year-old twin girls just seventeen days apart in 1855, after which she wrote, "how lone and desolate feels the mother's heart."<sup>41</sup> That same year, Emma Franklin also died of diphtheria at age eleven. The images of her children thus also emphasize her role as devoted mother, especially in the

wake of losing so many of them at young ages. One of the grandest portraits, created by Joseph Henry Bush, which emphasized her role as mother, depicts Adelia Acklen holding the hand of her daughter Emma Franklin, who appears to be about two years old. This life-sized portrait hung on the west wall of the entrance hall to the home while the large companion portrait that depicted Joseph Acklen hung on the east wall. After the deaths of the twins and then Emma, Acklen poignantly placed William Rinehart's *Sleeping Children* sculpture directly before it, as is shown in C.C. Giers photograph of the room from circa 1867. The sculpture was meant to evoke her deceased twin daughters, Laura and Corinne, whose names were etched in the sculpture's base.<sup>42</sup> The home's frequent visitors would have been greeted immediately upon their arrival by these works, and taken together they represent both devotion to family and the unspeakable loss Acklen had endured. They thus surely helped evoke sympathy for the widowed mother.

Commissioning posthumous portraits seems to have become a regular form of grieving employed by Acklen. This is perhaps best demonstrated by an elaborate portrait of the Acklen children, commissioned to commemorate the deaths of Laura and Corinne, entitled *The Twins: Their Resurrection*. Although the work's location is unknown, knowledge of it remains. It was commissioned from Robert Gschwindt, an artist of European (possibly