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Belmont

I. Nashville Home of Adelicia Acklen*

By Eleanor Graham

Belmont, often written "Belle Monte" by its founder, Adelicia Hayes Franklin Acklen Cheatham, and located "two miles south of the city," was built in 1850. As its name implies, Belmont sits on the crest of a hill, one that rises gently along what is now Sixteenth Avenue, South; and, in like manner, westward from the Middle Franklin Road (Granny White Pike); and eastward from what is now Hillsboro Village. Some distance beyond, in the south, are the blue-gray-lavender Harpeth Hills. Designed as an Italianate villa with Greek Revival details, an open courtyard on the north and recessed portico on the south, the latter feature characteristic of homes with Greek Revival details in Middle Tennessee, Belmont was brilliant white in a setting of trees—oak, ash, cedar, and flowering magnolia.

"I have long had a desire to cross the great ocean and see something of life on the other side," Adelicia Acklen wrote her mother,

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* In keeping with the format of this series on historic sites in Tennessee, footnotes have been minimized. The author and the editor, however, have thoroughly documented copies to which questions on sources may be referred.

In addition to those sources specifically cited in the text, the following should be noted:

Hayes-McGavock Papers; Nashville Female Academy File; Cheatham Family File; Lawrence Family Papers; Ward-Belmont Collection; and the John P. Heiss Papers, all in the Manuscripts Unit, Tennessee State Library and Archives. Also, the Acklen File, in the Nashville Public Library; the Acklen Family Bible, at Belmont College; and Records Group 36, National Archives and Records Service. The court records of Davidson County, Tennessee, and of West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana (the latter including the monumental *Succession of Isaac Franklin*) have been frequently referred to.

Published material consulted includes W. W. Clayton, *History of Davidson County, Tennessee* (Nashville, 1880); Roberta Seawell Brandau (ed.), *History of the Homes and Gardens of Tennessee* (Nashville, 1936); Wendell Holmes Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin, Slave Trader and Planter* (Baton Rouge, 1938); Ivar Lou (Myhr) Duncan, *A History of Belmont College* (Nashville, 1967); Byrd Douglas, *Steamboating on the Cumberland* (Nashville, 1961); and William Waller (ed.), *Nashville in the 1890s* (Nashville, 1970).

Valuable information has been made available through personal interviews with Miss Lorene Cook, Dr. Herbert C. Gabhart, Mrs. William Gibbs, Mrs. Margaret W. Greenlee, Albert W. Hutchison, Jr., John Kiser, Robert M. McBride, Robert A. McGaw, Mrs. Jeannette (Acklen) Noel, Mrs. Ellen (Stokes) Weymss, and

Mrs. Oliver Bliss Hayes, in a mood of reminiscence. "I have dreamed especially of Italy. . . ." This preference would be reflected in choices of the Acklens in regard to European cities they would visit, and in regard to plans for their home in Nashville.

Household items and art, bought in Italy, were taken to the site where Belmont was being constructed. There would be elaborate gardens and grounds with Italian fountains, mantels of Carrara marble, and Italian statuary. Even the name "Belmont" and the general layout of the estate are believed to have occurred to the Acklens when they saw an Italian version of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, where Portia's home was the villa "Belle Monte." Tennessee Capitol Architect William Strickland, who was in Nashville at the time, may have had a part in the planning of Belmont, although documentation for this conjecture has not been found. Influences from other sources would include a representation of the labyrinth at Hampton Court that one entered through trellises of roses and, when viewing the south portico, one would note "a strong resemblance . . . to the Petit Trianon in the gardens of the Palace of Versailles."[1] Rumors were that there would be a deer park, a conservatory, and an elaborate waterworks that would serve the entire estate. No expense was being spared.

For those who might be startled that an estate of such proportions should be developed on the border of a city of slightly more than 10,000, a city just emerging from frontier status, it should be pointed out that Nashville was not unaccustomed to elegance and renown. Two men had recently gone from its environs to the Presidency. Jackson's Hermitage had been a second White House during and immediately after his terms of office; ex-President Polk had died at Polk Place only within the year and his widow, presiding there now, had made Polk Place something of a national shrine. There was the University of Nashville, made distinctive by the Lindsleys, and Dr. Hume's (and later Dr. Elliott's) Female Academy. At the moment the State Capitol was rising on a hill about 200 feet above the Cumberland River, and there were distinguished churches and plantation houses, the latter often representing a development from log cabin to four-room house to mansion.

But Belmont would be different. It would spring full-blown,

palatial from the beginning. It would be, according to plans, one of the finest private residences in the South.

One views Adelicia Hayes with considerable interest. She would be Mrs. Isaac Franklin for seven years, Mrs. Joseph A. S. Acklen for more than fourteen years, and Mrs. William A. Cheatham for a longer period, following her third marriage in 1867. Her roots, deep in Scotland, had moved westward from Massachusetts to Nashville in 1808 when her father, Oliver Bliss Hayes, came with the westward movement, not as a long hunter or frontier farmer to be sure but as a professional man, a young lawyer. He was a son of the Reverend Joel Hayes, Congregational minister of South Hadley, Mass., and descendant of Charles Chauncy, second president of Harvard. A future President, Rutherford B. Hayes, was a cousin. A handsome, intelligent man, attracted by opportunities for lawyers that sprang from overlapping land claims in the West, Hayes became in time a law partner of Thomas Hart Benton and prospered in both law and real estate. At twenty-eight he married Sarah C. Hightower, daughter of a wealthy farmer of Williamson County.[2] The artist Ralph E. W. Earl, who painted her portrait when she was seventeen, said, "I never had a lovelier model."

Adelicia, one of their seven children, attended the Nashville Female Academy, taking the ten-year course. The Academy, located at Church Street and Ninth Avenue with a student body of slightly more than one hundred, emphasized scholarship, character, and the social graces. It drew its faculty from wherever the best teachers could be found and in time included one each from England, Scotland, and France. School days opened and closed with prayer, and an acceptable essay was required for graduation. Visits by celebrities were features of the program—the Marquis de LaFayette addressed the school on May 5, 1825, while Adelicia was a student.

That Adelicia did well in school is indicated by varied resources including a "Bill of Recitations," dated July 22, 1825, which records two hundred "perfect recitations," with only four marked "bad," and with perfect attendance. The spelling, the easy-to-read sentences, and the general grace of her letters, many of which are available, attest to the quality of her education.

More interesting, though, to one studying the life of Adelicia

Hayes and her role in the history of Nashville, is the information that at seventeen she was happily engaged to be married.

A more appropriate wedding would be hard to imagine. Alfonso Gibbs was twenty-two, handsome, the son of George Washington Gibbs, prominent lawyer and banker of Nashville, friend of the Hayes family, and recently graduated from the Harvard Law School. The young couple had sat for portraits, indicating that both families favored the marriage.[3] But the marriage was not to be for on October 2, 1834, Alfonso Gibbs died of typhoid fever.[4]

Undoubtedly, Adelicia Hayes was one of Nashville's most popular and promising young ladies. The fact that she was beautiful and intelligent-looking is sustained by portraits. She had brown hair, blue eyes, clear-cut features, a broad brow, and (according to Mrs. Oscar Noel, Sr., and other descendants) she was small, her normal weight throughout her life being not more than ninety-five pounds. But such confidence as she must have had appears to have been shaken by the tragic loss of young Gibbs. It was not until five years later that she again considered marriage.

We can't be sure just how Adelicia Hayes met Isaac Franklin. One story is that she was visiting Judge and Mrs. John J. White in Gallatin (Mrs. White being a cousin) when it was suggested that Adelicia might like to go to Fairvue to see the recent additions to the home and, incidentally, meet the bachelor who owned the estate. The bachelor, it was said, had six plantations in Louisiana, more than 600 slaves, numerous holdings in Texas, and other properties, all in addition to Fairvue. True, he had formerly traded in slaves, but now as a planter he spent his time in Sumner County where he raised grain, cattle, and horses, and on his Louisiana plantations where he raised cotton. A friend described him as a "man of leisure and financial independence who frequented Tennessee's watering places and occasionally sojourned at Virginia Springs." It was probably not often mentioned, although it was generally known that on the debit side, Isaac Franklin was fifty years old.

Mr. Franklin was not at home when the Whites and Adelicia

[3] The matching portraits are now owned by Mrs. John Bell, of Washington, D.C., and copies by Mrs. Malcolm Gibbs, of Thompson Station, Tennessee.

[4] Not long after the tragedy, Adelicia Hayes wrote a poem of sixteen stanzas in memory of Alfonso Gibbs, signed her name, and sent it to Alfonso's sister. There it remained for 134 years. On November 16, 1968, Mrs. Walter Gibbs brought the poem to the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

arrived, but an elderly Negro man greeted them, inviting them to sign the register. Adelicia signed, murmuring something to the effect that she was sorry Mr. Franklin wasn't at home. At this point, according to the story, the butler remarked, "It don't make no difference, ma'am. You couldn't have caught him." Adelicia wrote beside her name, "I like this house. I'd like to meet the owner."

Whether the Whites first accompanied Adelicia to Fairvue, or whether the original attraction was based on money or love or both, a match materialized. On the morning of July 2, 1839, Adelicia Hayes married Isaac Franklin at the Presbyterian Church in Nashville, the ceremony being performed by Dr. John Todd Edgar.

The marriage was a happy one. Four children followed: Victoria, Adelicia, an infant son, and Emma. Franklin showed great interest in his three daughters. He built a playhouse for them at Fairvue, planned their education, and stored a cask of fine wine to be opened at Victoria's wedding. But such dreams were not to materialize. While on a trip to one of his Louisiana plantations, Isaac Franklin died on April 27, 1846, after a brief illness, at the age of fifty-seven.

At Fairvue, where Franklin was buried, a double tragedy came to Adelicia less than a month later. The two older daughters, Victoria and Adelicia, became ill with croup and bronchitis and died within three days.

The wealth of Isaac Franklin has been variously estimated. In addition to the plantations in Louisiana, the land in Texas, and the Fairvue estate which was a showplace then as it is today, there were also numerous investments. His will made provisions for his widow, the three daughters, and left funds for the maintenance of two educational institutions—the Isaac Franklin Institute to be established in Sumner County, and the Franklin Seminary in New Orleans, already operating. John Armfield and Oliver B. Hayes were executors of the estate.[5]

Questions arose as to the inheritance of Victoria and Adelicia, who had survived their father by less than six weeks. In the litigation that followed, the case, argued in Louisiana and in Tennessee over a period of five years, gave the value of the

[5] John Armfield was Franklin's nephew and business partner.

Franklin holdings at $750,000. The result of the litigation was that Adelicia, as widow of Franklin and as heir of the two daughters, received the bulk of the estate. Possibly the most valuable feature of the inheritance was income from the plantations, although it varied widely from year to year. In the final settlement the educational institutions were not supported. The historical importance of this marriage and litigation is that it centered control in Nashville of what was believed to be the largest fortune in the South.

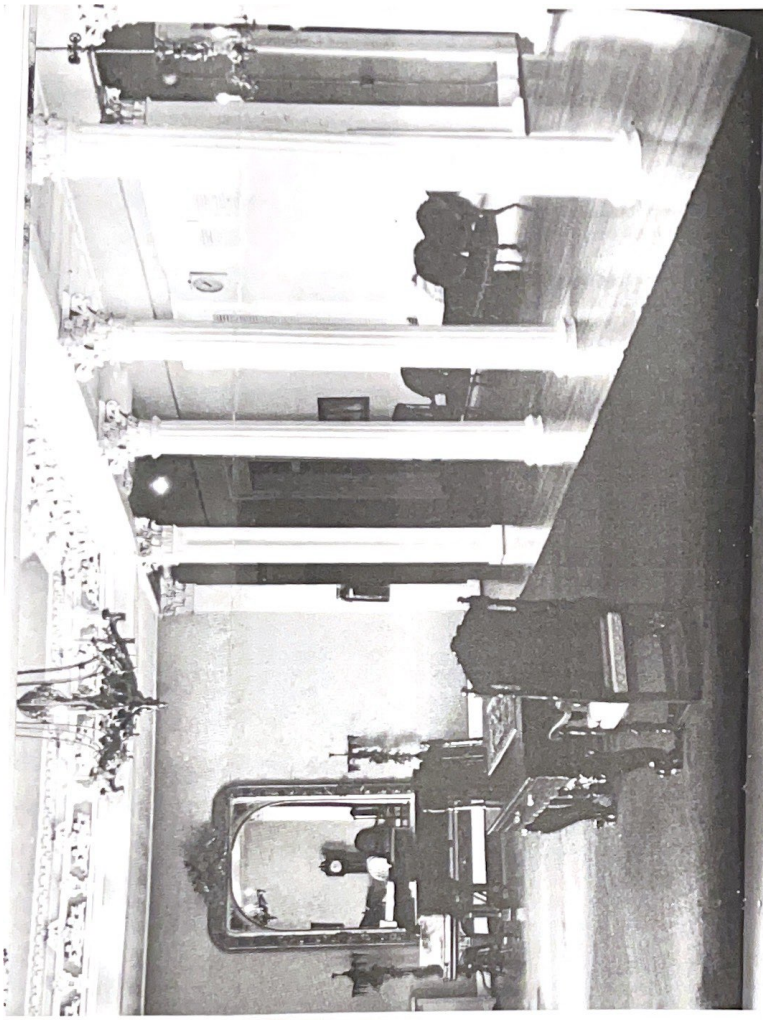
One may speculate that Adelicia, beautiful in her late twenties and "distinguished for graces and accomplishments," did not lack suitors.

> When the youthful widow reappeared in society, it was even with more brilliant loveliness, softened by a general grace and dignity that won more admiration than ever. Her hand was a prize coveted by many distinguished admirers. . . .[6]

At this time there was an interesting bachelor in Huntsville, Alabama. He was young, thirty-two, only three years older than Adelicia. His distinctions included having served as United States attorney for northern Alabama, winning a colonelcy during service in the Mexican War, and being the grandson of John Hunt who founded Huntsville. In addition, and perhaps more important, he was personable and handsome; indeed, when one examines the matching portraits it is seen that Adelicia and Joseph Alexander Smith Acklen, both with brown hair, broad brow, and distinguished features, looked very much alike. It appears that here was a romance such as novelists try to put on paper and composers make the focus of operatic extravaganzas. It became known that the name "Acklen" would come to Nashville. Together, the Acklens would build the Belmont mansion, develop the grounds and gardens, collect works of art, establish a tradition of hospitality, and found an influential family in what was to become Metropolitan Nashville.

[6] Ellet, *Queens*, 418.

Illustrations: Belmont (cover), photo by Louis C. Williams; Adelicia Acklen (front.); the Water Tower (p. 351), photos by Williams; the grounds of Belmont, c. 1851, from a painting by an unidentified artist (p. 352); Belmont Mansion (p. 353), photo by Williams from collections of Belmont College; and the ballroom, Acklen Hall (p. 354), photo by Williams



A few days before the marriage Adelicia added to the sixty-five and one-half acres given her by her father, Oliver B. Hayes. On May 5, 1849, she bought from James Woods one hundred and four acres adjoining her property "about two miles south of Nashville running to the Lawrence's corner." Adelicia Franklin and Joseph A. S. Acklen then executed a deed of trust beginning, "Whereas a marriage is intended shortly. . . ." After listing Mrs. Franklin's properties, the deed stated that "the said Adelicia does give, grant and convey to her father, Oliver B. Hayes, all the aforesaid estates and properties . . . for the sole use of Adelicia and her heirs forever . . . free from the debts, contracts, encumbrances or control of the intended husband and for her support and maintenance of the issue of the said marriage. . . ." The wedding was solemnized on May 8, 1849, at the Presbyterian Church, Dr. John T. Edgar officiating.

It was during the honeymoon tour of Europe that the Acklens gathered many ideas as well as possessions that were to contribute to the development of the Belmont estate. Although some reports indicate that the trip lasted nineteen months, it seems clear that there must have been two trips and that the initial trip was of shorter duration, for Joseph and Adelicia were in Nashville for the birth of their son, Joseph Hayes Acklen, on May 19, 1850.

Although exact dates are not known, construction of their home must have started soon after the Acklens returned to Nashville. Roads that would become driveways approached Belmont, winding up the sloping wooded hill, one coming from Hillsboro Turnpike on the west, the other coming from what is now Granny White Pike on the east. In interesting contrast the white-columned mansion had two facades, one facing north, the other south. The driveways were lined with cedars and flowering magnolias.

"My father told me about the four handsome mares, their bodies burnished gold with heavy silvery white manes and tails, that grandmother Adelicia imported from Spain," Mrs. Oscar Noel, Sr., recalled recently. "He remembered grandmother Adelicia driving through the Belmont gates on the Hillsboro Pike about where Acklen Avenue crosses, along the driveway that wound through the tall trees. The mares, Palominos, would take the carriage at a merry clip. Unlike some ladies, grandmother liked to take the reins and

appropriate uniform for formal occasions. When Madame Le Vert visited Belmont, the harness, I am told, was wrapped in gold ribbons."

Belmont mansion viewed from the south was graceful and imposing, with Corinthian columns soaring in the central portico, a small observatory on top, the central section balanced by lower wings on the sides, each with a small balcony and delicate iron trellises and window guards. However, to view Belmont best the major focus possibly should be on the over-all design, which consisted of the mansion, gardens, and grounds. While some ideas were borrowed, the resulting layout is largely original, surprisingly comprehensive and interesting, with artistic balance and frequent vistas of startling beauty.

South of the mansion were three formal gardens in diminishing size with a large white low-lying conservatory and water tower of hand-made brick, 105 feet tall, providing balance on the other side of the gardens. Beyond, at a distance, one might enjoy the hazy beauty of the Harpeth Hills. The conservatory was closely related to the mansion, providing fresh flowers for the tables and rooms throughout the year, and the tower, or waterworks. This latter structure featured a moat at its base fed by limestone springs, with a windmill (and later a steam engine) to draw water into storage tanks that fed an intricate system of underground pipes which watered the entire estate—the gardens, fountains, orchards and arbors, as well as the mansion.

According to William H. Acklen, the second son of Adelicia and Joseph A. S. Acklen, who grew up at Belmont, the central and principal feature of the three circular gardens located between the mansion and the conservatory was the largest of the lovely iron-work summer houses, called the pavilion, in the second circle. Roses, star jasmine, and eglantine, said to be Adelicia's favorites, were featured in the central location. An Italian marble fountain was in the center of the garden nearest the mansion, while lush bloomings of roses made the third and smaller garden a delight. There were also four other smaller lace-like summer houses, numerous examples of Italian statuary, and plantings of box. Paths winding from the mansion around and through the gardens to the conservatory and elsewhere were covered with delicate white and pink shells.

the wooded park along the road leading from what is now Hillsboro Village, where one may be sure that deer, squirrels, rabbits, and chipmunks, as well as birds were abundant. Near the mansion on the corner, where Acklen and Belmont avenues now intersect, was the Acklen Art Gallery, a handsome, though small, Greek Revival building that housed various art objects. The major portion of this collection is now at the Ackland Center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, a memorial to William Hayes Acklen, who gave the collection to the University.[7]

Across the gardens was a substantial building housing a bowling alley and billiard room, a lovely small building called a Bear Pit (later used as a teahouse) in the southeast corner of the grounds. In the southwest area was a small zoo featuring monkeys who, it is said, enjoyed dressing in colorful costumes to entertain guests. There were also several supporting features such as stables, orchards, grape arbor, propagating beds and a propagating house. Interesting also and vital to the life of Belmont were the horse blocks and hitching posts that lined, at appropriate spaces, the large circle near the mansion.

South of the grounds was an artificial lake. Mrs. Noel remembers that the family called this "the pond" and that her father often spoke of enjoying skating there during memorable freezes. This was also the place where the Acklen boys liked to keep pet alligators they had brought from the Louisiana plantation. "I remember my father telling the story about one of the alligators, a large one, more than six feet long, getting loose and starting to town, via the Hillsboro Turnpike, causing quite a commotion," Mrs. Noel reports.

Pictures of the Italian courtyard on the north of Belmont are not available. Apparently in the early 1850's the lash of Tennessee winters damaged the marble floors of the open courtyard, and it was covered with hardwood and enclosed to form the ballroom as we see it today. Possibly, also, the hanging stairway was turned from the foyer to provide an entrance to the ballroom, and the iron lacework galleries and small south porticoes were added at this time. Records relating to this work have not been found.

The 1850's and early 1860's were momentous years in the lives of the beautiful and wealthy Adelicia and Joseph Acklen. Besides European travel, the planning and development of the South's

most elaborate estate, there was also the establishment of the tradition of Belmont hospitality,[8] and the growth of the Acklen family.

The family spent summers at Belmont, winters at Angola Plantation in Louisiana, with occasional visits to New Orleans. Travel from Nashville to Angola and from the plantation to New Orleans, was on the fabulous Mississippi, Ohio, and Cumberland river packets, for this was the high tide of travel, both social and commercial, on the rivers.

Splendid as these years were, there were crushing blows. In late January 1855 at Angola Plantation the twin daughters, Laura and Corinne Acklen, three years old, became ill with scarlet fever and died. Joseph and Adelicia brought the bodies back to Nashville for burial. Less than a month after the death of the twins, Adelicia wrote the following letter from Louisiana on stationery heavily lined with black:

> I should have written you soon after our return to the Plantation, but for my afflictions which have been sore—even now at times, it seems a terrible dream to me—and when I ask, Can it be? Is it so? —that those dear lovely little ones are to gladden my sight no more in this life? Their little arms no more to twine around my neck, nor their sweet prattle to delight my ears? Oh, too sad comes the conviction that it is so. How lone and desolate feels the mother's heart. . . .

The year 1855 was to bring other changes. On September 8, William Hayes Acklen was born at Belmont, and on November 1, Emma Franklin, now almost eleven and the only surviving of the Franklin children, died of diphtheria at the Nashville estate. In the latter 50's the last two of Adelicia's ten children were born at Belmont—Claude, in 1857, and Pauline in 1859.

The prosperous 1850's which saw Nashville complete its magnificent State Capitol, receive its first railroad, and enjoy the development of two fabulous estates, Belmont and Belle Meade, was soon to be shattered. Following some delay, after guns replaced shrill voices, Tennessee joined the Confederacy. Protected only by forts on its river lifelines, Nashville had to choose between destruction and occupation after the twin forts of Henry and Donelson fell. In an amphibious operation, gunboats leading,

[8] The hospitality of Belmont is perhaps best described in a local novel: Alfred Leland Crabb, *Dinner at Belmont* (Indianapolis, 1949).

Federal forces took advantage of the river highways that provided access into the heart of the state. Individuals and families in Nashville faced hard choices. Some took their children to homes of relatives in other parts of the country. Numerous men joined armies, Federal or Confederate. Some fled. Others, confused, milled around. A few families divided to try to protect property in different parts of the country. Most of the people stood firm. As the mayor made plans to surrender the city, Adelicia Acklen wrote the following letter to her brother Oliver Hayes:

> Of course, you have heard of the dangers here. I thought it best to remain but prevailed upon Mr. Acklen to go South. He left this evening and says you and Hal must look after us when you can, as I would like him to go, indeed, I know it was very important he should be there, and for reasons I would be safer here without him. I thought, too, it best to send one of the carriages and pair of horses a little further out of reach, and will be much obliged if you will take charge of them. If you . . . leave soon, I would like to send out the victoria, let me know what you think best. . . . They say private citizens will not be interrupted on their property. If you think of anything to advise about, let me know. . . .

Following the surrender of the city, Nashville became supply headquarters for Federal armies in the West. Federal troops pitched tents among other places between Belmont and Broad Street. Although Belmont mansion was not molested, Federal troops used the tower for reconnaissance and giving signals. A Federal observer wrote:

> His [Acklen's] buildings are gothic-ified and starched and bedizened to perfection. . . . Looking upon it from adjacent high grounds, the white marble fountains, emblems, and statues cause the place to resemble somewhat a fashionable cemetery. . . . He [Acklen] is off with the rebel army. His wife, however, well fills his place, says our report, so far as rebellion sympathies can extend. . . .[9]

Meanwhile, Adelicia was helping other Nashville women in the hospitals, and taking care of her family and property. The Belmont silver, along with other valuables, had been stored at the home of Mrs. James K. Polk who, as the widow of a President, was considered immune to the fury of the conflict. Adelicia kept in close contact with members of her family, bringing her widowed

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[9] John Fitch. *Annals of the Army of the Cumberland* (Philadelphia, n.d.), 633. [illegible] for more

mother from Rokeby to Belmont. Two excerpts from letters to her brother Oliver read:

> The "screws" tighten every day . . . don't come to see us now. Be careful! Dr. [William] Bass was shot and killed instantly by the pickets; he was buried today. . . . If there is anything I can do for you or Emily at any time, let me know, or anything you would like hauled out from town in the way of supplies. Ma is here and sends love to all. . . . .
>
> General Rosecrans had a grand serviens of the troops day before yesterday. All is quite tense here now. They are expecting daily to be ordered off. . . . Captain Kain, the commander, advised me to wait until the last of the week for the vouchers as they would be more satisfactory. He says you are also entitled to vouchers for your fowls and if you will send an estimate, I will include them. . . . Won't you be down in a few days? I have something to say I cannot write. . . .

It was in September of the third year of the war that sad news reached Adelicia at Belmont. While supervising the Angola plantation Joseph had been thrown from his buggy when a wheel went into a ditch, with the result that he became chilled during the long walk home. A severe cold developed, followed by pneumonia. He died on September 11, 1863, at the age of forty-seven.[10]

Almost immediately, an urgent call came to Adelicia from Louisiana. Her cousin later wrote this account:

> [She] was told to go immediately to her plantation as there was a very large amount of cotton which was in Confederate lines, and was in danger of being burned by either army as the Federals held the Mississippi River and the cotton lay only a few miles back.
>
> By the earnest solicitation of my cousin [Adelicia] I consented to accompany her, and thinking it would take only about six weeks to get the cotton out and sold. But two weeks after we reached the plantation, General [Leonidas] Polk issued orders to burn all cotton. . . . Mrs. Acklen not being strong enough to make the trip out into the Confederacy, insisted that I go to headquarters and see General Polk and try and get the order rescinded. . . . I went with a trusted friend in a carriage drawn by two mules over dirt roads, a distance of one hundred fifty miles, and when we were within a few miles of General Polk's headquarters, we were stopped and turned back on account of General Sherman's army advancing so rapidly.
>
> We went to Brook Haven and there we saw Mr. Godfrey Fogg of

[10] After the war, Joseph Acklen's remains were returned to Nashville and reinterred in the Acklen vault in Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

> Nashville who informed me that Col. [Edward] Dillon, a nephew of General Robert E. Lee, was stationed at Clinton, Mississippi. . . . I went back to the plantation with temporary injunctions from him not to burn the cotton until he could communicate with General Polk.
>
> I made several arduous trips out into the Confederacy and at last was successful in getting a permit for Mrs. Acklen to remove her cotton to the Mississippi River. I had Confederate guards to guard the cotton. . . . Admiral [David D.] Porter was on an inspection tour of the gunboats at the time and was at the boats near the plantation. He gave Mrs. Acklen permission to hire wagons to haul her cotton to the River, her teams having been taken by the southern army. The cotton was shipped to New Orleans, and from there, to Liverpool. . . .
>
> Our stay in Louisiana was eight months instead of six weeks. Landed in New York in August, 1864.[11]

After Lee surrendered his sword at Appomattox Adelicia Acklen was widowed, as were so many others, but otherwise her circumstances were different. She was probably wealthier than she was before the war. Taking the four surviving children, she left for Europe. The legend is that she left Belmont, saying that she would retrace the route that she and Joseph had so much enjoyed in 1849-1850. Be this true or not it seems likely, for letters came from the same cities in England and on the continent. She bought additional works of art for Belmont. And there was an extension of social life:

> Her beauty, grace and courtly manner, with her rich and tasteful dress at all times, and the superb style in which she lived, created a sensation in Paris, and in social circles she was universally admired. . . .
>
> She was invited to the Imperial Ball at the opening of the National Assembly, and was received with marked courtesy by the French Emperor and Empress.[12]

Mrs. Oscar Noel, Sr., has a interesting pin, a French hunting horn in gold with the head of a stag hound protruding where the horn curls, which was presented to Adelicia in the name of the

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[11] Sarah (Ewing) Gaut, cousin of Adelicia Acklen, in an article in the Nashville *American* (Supplement), of September 13, 1907. For information on the Southern policy of burning cotton in an effort to get England and France to intervene in the Civil War, see Frank L. Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America* (Chicago, 1931), 43.

Empress Eugenie when she rode beautifully and skillfully to hounds on the imperial meadows at Fontainebleau. "Aunt Pauline spoke often of Adelicia's skill in riding," Mrs. Noel recalled recently. "Adelicia seldom bothered to open a gate. If it was at all possible, she preferred that the horse jump."

From England and the continent, Adelicia wrote regularly to her mother. These excerpts show she had not forgot Belmont:

> I was thinking this morning on awakening, for I have been dreaming of home, how very far away I had gotten from you all, and the farther off the more you are in my thoughts. I dreamed last night I was in my Greenhouse at Belmont. . . .
>
> I do feel so thankful that in all my travels my dear little ones have kept so well and seem to enjoy themselves. Claude had a little fever one day from being in the sun. . . . I have heard so much of the bright skies of Italy and the gorgeous sunsets. I do not find them more bright than our own have been. I saw a sunset to equal but not surpass many I have seen at Belle Monte. I may be partial but I think our own America the most beautiful country after all. True, we have no such city as Paris, but I look in vain for the magnificent forests of America and the beauty of natural scenery. . . .

Adelicia returned to Nashville late in 1866, opened Belmont, and resumed her social career. On December 18, for example, she gave a brilliant reception for her house guest, Madame Le Vert.[13]

> The reception complimentary to Madame Le Vert, preparations for which caused no small excitement in the business streets of Nashville . . . was called "the forerunner of a new regime of entertainments, combining intellectual and artistic enjoyment with perfect taste."
>
> The observatory, groves, and parterres were illuminated, and the effect of the light among the statues, shrubbery, and flowers, with music along the portico, was fairy-like. . . .[14]

The guests entered Belmont mansion from the south between white columns, past heavy walnut doors hand carved and flanked by windows of rich Venetian glass, into the foyer, where the chill of the December night was dispelled by flames from the open fireplace, with its mantel of Italian marble, a large mirror above it

[13] Madame Le Vert, née Octavia Walton, daughter of a governor of Florida, was an intimate friend of Adelicia Acklen. Her husband was Dr. Henry Le Vert, of Mobile, of a French Royalist family. Madame Le Vert moved in elegant society on two continents, and her friendship with Adelicia seemed to have been of mutual satisfaction and benefit.

[14] Ellet, *Queens,* 419.

framed in heavy gold leaf. On each side were drawing rooms, also with marble mantels, open fires, pier glass, and delicate plaster work around the ceilings and centers of the rooms in dove and fruit basket design. Handsome bronze chandeliers, suspended from a medallion in each room, provided light. The rooms were furnished in mahogany and rosewood, including the large Jenny Lind piano at which the celebrated musician sang when she was in Nashville in 1851, and on which Adelicia often played favorite ballads. Other furnishings included portraits, pier glass, original statuary, paintings, prints, and engravings. Receiving guests in the grand ballroom were Adelicia Acklen, and Madame Le Vert and her daughter.

It seemed clear that Adelicia Acklen, after viewing at close range the social order on each side of the Atlantic, had come home to Nashville. In the spring of 1867 it became known that she would marry a Nashvillian, William Archer Cheatham. Dr. Cheatham, member of a socially prominent Middle Tennessee family, cousin of General Benjamin Franklin Cheatham of Civil War fame, a practicing physician who had served the Confederacy with distinction, and graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, was a widower with two daughters.

As was customary, Adelicia Acklen and Dr. Cheatham signed a marriage contract, dated June 17, 1867. George A. Shields, husband of Adelicia's sister, was named trustee. The contract, as did her previous one with Joseph Acklen, reserved to Adelicia the sole use of Belmont and her other property for herself "free from the debts and control of her intended husband and for the support of her and her children. . . ."

The marriage was solemnized in the gardens at Belmont, June 16, with friends and relatives attending. Fifteen hundred people were invited to the reception. As carriages approached the gardens a scene of splendor came into view. "From every tree, shrub, and bush, lights flashed, some red, others throwing bright blue beams across the darkened walks and through the foliage. . . . Every window of the mansion seemed ablaze, and the sound of music greeted the guests. . . . Marshals were stationed near the mansion to assist. . . . Mrs. Cheatham wore heavy flowing white silk with a veil of Brussels point lace. . . . Upon her head a coronet sat grace-

[illegible] leadership for more

with a diamond clasp encircled her waist."[15]

The years following this brilliant wedding (reported to have cost $10,000) seem to reflect for the Cheathams some of the problems that the South underwent during Reconstruction. For example, Adelicia wrote to her sister Corinne from Louisiana in 1872 that "I have converted the old dining room into a kitchen. I have a nice new stove in it and it is so convenient . . . I am often there supervising my cook who is not very proficient, but we live plainly." And later, "I have taken entire charge of my business. I found it necessary. . . . I hope we shall have a better year than last. . . . The crop was very small and the taxes so burdensome."[16]

Family correspondence notes activities of the Cheatham family during the following years, but it is sufficient to say here that by 1885 Adelicia and Dr. Cheatham were separated, though never divorced, and that she was living in Washington, D.C. In January 1887, in a transaction in Washington and recorded in Nashville, Mrs. Cheatham sold Belmont to Lewis T. Baxter. In April of the same year Adelicia Cheatham and her daughter, Pauline Acklen, went to New York to buy furniture for a home Adelicia had built on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington. During that trip Adelicia became ill with pneumonia while staying at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. There she died on May 4, 1887.

The body of Adelicia Cheatham, accompanied by two of her sons, was returned to Nashville two days later. The funeral eulogy was delivered by the Reverend Jere Witherspoon from the First Presbyterian Church.

Adelicia Cheatham had given the church a large bell in 1867. This magnificent bell, whose voice could be heard throughout the city, was used as a fire alarm between 1870 and 1890, and has been rung daily at noon since 1890.

> The officers of the church thought it fitting that the bell she placed in the tower at her own expense should be made the means of ringing out to the city and all her friends the sad news of her decease. And now through all the coming years, her name shall be associated in our minds with the vibrating echoes. . . .[17]

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[15] Undated scrapbook in possession of Mack Wayne Craig, David Lipscomb College.

[16] When Adelicia died, in 1887, her estate was valued in excess of $350,000, her four children being the residual heirs.

[17] Nashville *Daily American*, May 8, 1887, p. 5.

The remains of Adelicia Hayes Franklin Acklen Cheatham rest in the handsome Acklen Mausoleum in Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Nashville, under the shadow of the fallen angel, "Peri," a statue of translucent white marble that Adelicia brought from Italy to Nashville.

It is appropriate that Belmont with its rich traditions should have become focal to schools for young ladies from 1890 to 1951. The first of these was Belmont Junior College, 1890-1912, founded and directed by Miss Ida E. Hood and Miss Susan L. Heron; the second was Ward-Belmont, 1912-1951. Belmont Junior College, stating its purpose "to impart practical knowledge, recognizing the influence of atmosphere and environment, and to provide opportunities for a broad, scholarly education," opened with ceremonies in the Acklen mansion on September 4, 1890. Ninety young ladies enrolled.

Belmont College, offering a strong academic course, with emphasis also on music and elocution, flourished. Added to Acklen Hall, now called Faith Hall, were three companion buildings: Founder's Hall, Friendship Hall, and Fidelity Hall. All face Sixteenth Avenue, obscuring the north facade of the mansion. The Misses Hood and Heron, from Philadelphia, joint principals of the school as well as owners and founders, brought a distinguished faculty to the school. The school published a literary journal, *The Blue and the Bronze*.

In 1911 Belmont Junior College had more than 300 students and applications from additional girls for the coming year. Fortunately Adelicia's Belmont offered an ideal place for a girl's school. Although the city had expanded southwestward since 1875, with Vanderbilt University serving as a magnet and the Belmont area becoming incorporated, the school was still regarded as "in the country," linked for convenience to the city by the Belmont Car Line.

Meanwhile, distinguished Ward Seminary, with more than 500 girls, located near the heart of the city on fashionable Spruce Street (now Eighth Avenue, North) needed to expand. Ward's had flourished from the beginning, founded in 1865 by the Reverend William E. Ward, following the demise of Dr. Elliott's Female Academy during the war. Mr. and Mrs. Ward established a comprehensive curriculum and provided leadership for more

than twenty years. In 1891, the Presbyterian Cooperative Association, representing a group of distinguished Nashvillians, bought the school, designating its policy as Christian, but non-secretarian. In 1893 Dr. John D. Blanton became president of Ward Seminary, with Mrs. Blanton playing an important role in the school management.

It was fortunate that the two schools, Ward Seminary and Belmont College, could unite in 1912 on the grounds of the Belmont estate. Misses Hood and Heron had retired. Dr. and Mrs. Blanton led the new school, Ward-Belmont, for more than twenty years, through a period of enlargement and prosperity.

New buildings included John Diell Blanton Academic Building on the site of the old conservatory; with Heron, Pembroke, and Hail Halls on the east, all facing Adelicia's gardens. Beyond Blanton, under the shadow of the Tower and in view of Harpeth Hills, Club Village was built. Academically, Ward-Belmont was a leader among schools for girls, being the first junior college in the South to be fully accredited. Enrollment, drawn from throughout the country, reached more than 1,200 during the 1920's. Its departments of Speech and Music were widely recognized for excellence and plays, pageants, operettas, concerts, and especially the Ward-Belmont May Day were highlights of any year in Nashville. The girls wore navy blue, and they were chaperoned. Their attendance at the city's theaters, churches, sports events, and even on shopping expeditions created considerable attention.

> Education at best is a quiet even growth. It is more concerned with permanent roots than with leaves that will fall and be blown away with a change of season. In such a fundamental process, more is involved than the acquisition of skills. It is rather a question of touching and cultivating deep-seated attitudes, loves, hopes, and desires that guide us into making decisions.
> It is the purpose of Ward-Belmont to give this kind of education. . . .

But in 1929 and the early 1930's, the Depression hit Ward-Belmont with resounding force, leaving the school with a deficit of more than a million and a half dollars. Following Dr. Blanton and Dr. John Barton, the Hon. A. B. Benedict became president, serving until 1939, being succeeded by Dr. Joseph H. Burk, who served six years, with Dr. Robert Calhoun Provine as his successor. By 1951, more than $900,000 of the school's indebtedness had been paid.

The social fabric had been stretched by the trauma of World War I, the struggle for women's suffrage, and the startling 1920's when the waltz gave way to jazz, skirts crept upward, women's hair was cut short, and the flivver, the flapper, the coonskin coat and the Charleston confused the young and terrified the old. Somehow, during the 1920's Ward-Belmont stood firm.

Now the world had been shaken again, and to some extent shattered, by such tragedies as the rise of Hitler and Mussolini, the violence of Pearl Harbor, and the world-wide convulsions of World War II. American women and girls had served in the United States Army, Navy, and Marines. In early January, 1951, stockholders of Ward-Belmont, conferring with businessmen who held the mortgages decided that, although Ward-Belmont was a landmark and an asset to Nashville, nevertheless, the demand for an exclusive school for girls had probably come to an end. In February, the Tennessee Baptist Convention bought Ward-Belmont for the consideration of its indebtedness. At the final college commencement, June 5, 1951, Dr. Hugh S. Stuntz, president of Scarritt College, spoke, a choir sang, eighty-one diplomas were awarded, and F. Arthur Hinkle played "The Bells of Ward-Belmont" to conclude the activities of the school.

Belmont College, the third school to occupy the Acklen residence, although challenged by the expansion of public facilities, has flourished from the beginning. Founded March 11, 1951, enrollment has advanced from 136 students to 1,082 and the faculty and staff from 29 to 95 members. Fifty-seven countries and twenty-five states have been represented in the student body since 1951.

Fully accredited since 1959, under the leadership of Dr. Herbert C. Gabhart, Belmont College offers the standard bachelor's degrees. It has been fortunate to draw its faculties from strong sources, including Cumberland University, Tennessee College, Ward-Belmont, and other areas. New buildings include Williams Library, a Physical Education plant, a new Girls' Dormitory, and the magnificent Massey Auditorium and Fine Arts Building. Under construction at this writing is the Massey Building of Business Administration.

Belmont College, in full recognition of the power of continuity, cultivates and extends the Belmont traditions. Acklen Hall with its Greek columns, its iron lace balconies, its Venetian glass win-