

*Cherokee' -house Fort Payne Al-*



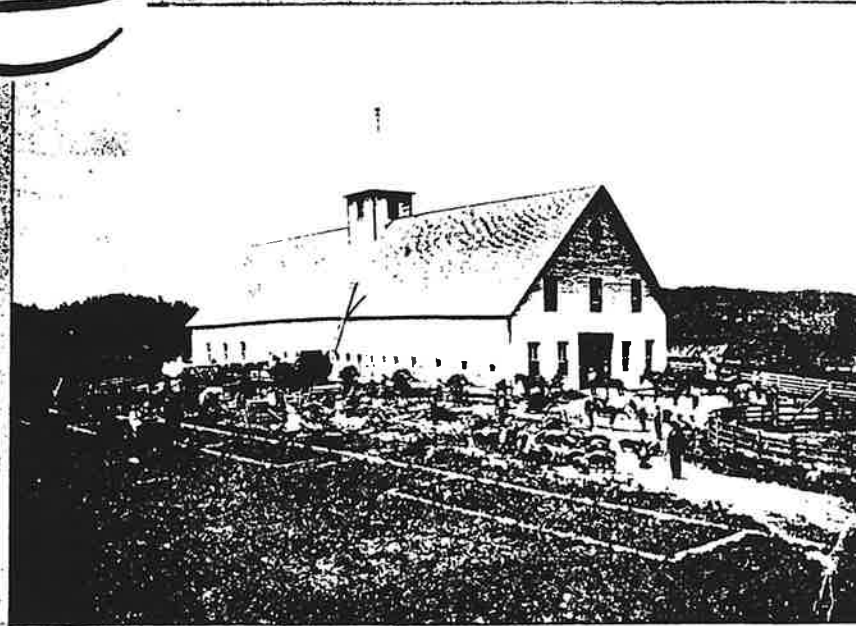
*Front View of home showing 248 year old oak tree.*



*View facing southwest showing barn and three of the oaks.*



*View facing southeast showing Lookout Mountain and four of the original oaks. In the background is L. M. Price, son-in-law of C. G. Kershaw, who with his family lived at Cherokee from 1924-1929.*



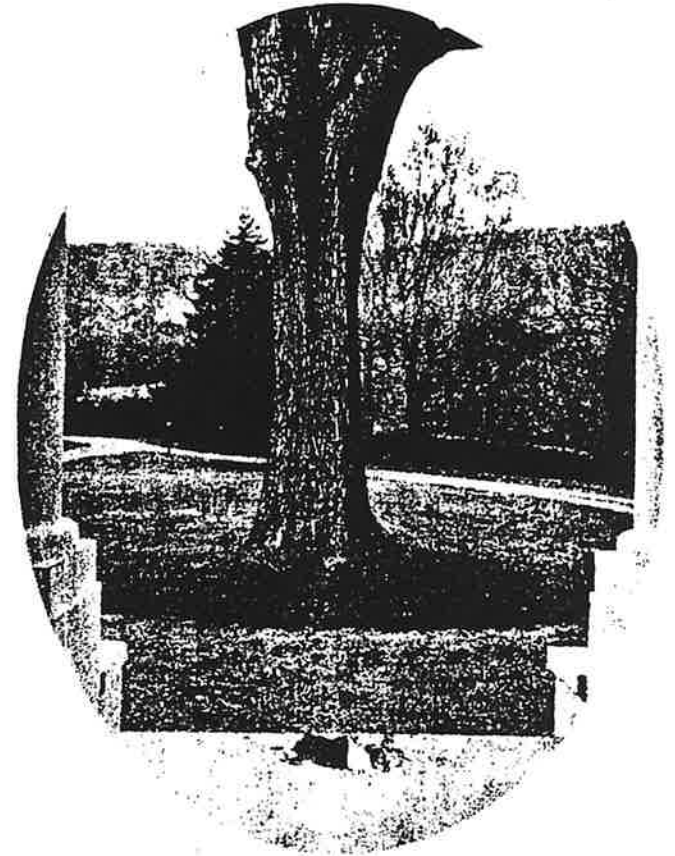
*This barn was constructed about 1895 by the Godfreys and for years it was the largest barn in northeast Alabama. It was used by the Godfreys and their farm workers. The barn was destroyed by fire in 1930. Photo was taken about 1898. Note the steam farm tractor and the horse-drawn farm equipment.*



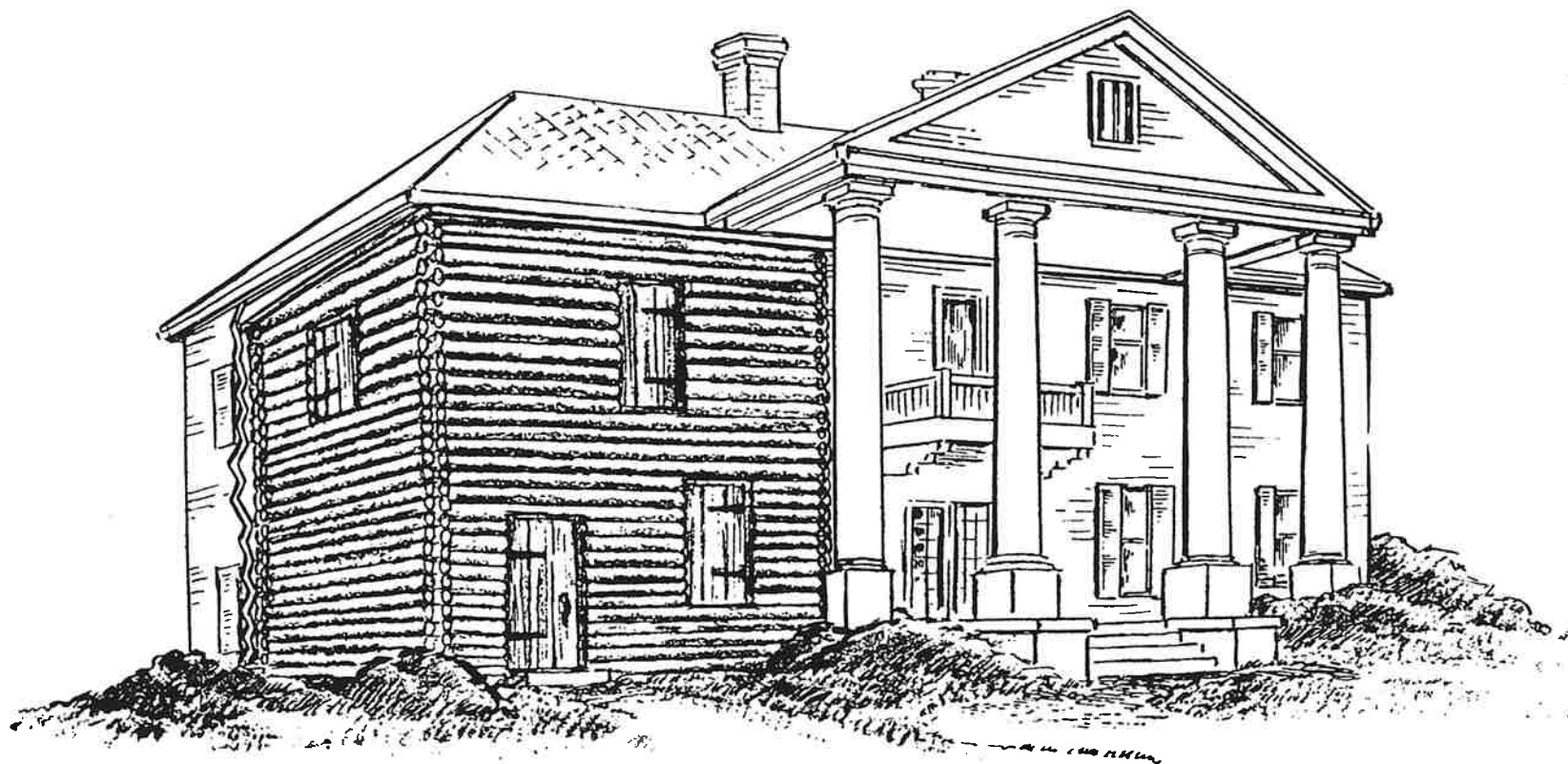
*H*ernando DeSoto, the noted Spanish explorer, was probably the first white man to visit the property now known as Cherokee. With 600 men he landed near Tampa Bay in the Gulf of Mexico about 1539 and began a zig-zag march up through Georgia and then inland to the Appalachian Mountains. A story passed down by the Indians and told by descendants of William W. McFarlane is that DeSoto camped at Cherokee and used the water from the spring at the bottom of the hill. After leaving the DeSoto Park area in 1540, he traveled toward Tuscaloosa, thence to Mobile and turned northwestward to Memphis where he discovered the Mississippi River.

In about 1722, at the foot of Lookout Mountain, approximately 4½ miles northeast of Ft. Payne, Alabama, an oak tree sprouted. In a few years it was joined by four more oak trees, beginning the beautiful landscape that surrounds the home known as Cherokee. Two of these

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*Looking out the front door at Lookout Mountain.*



*Drawing shows log cabin built by Daniel Ross about 1790. The logs are still in the walls of the home.*

magnificent trees are still standing. The one in front of the home was formerly used as a council site by the Cherokee Indians. Judge W. W. Haralson recalled hearing his mother, who was the daughter of W. W. Macfarlane, tell of passing the tree when she was very young and seeing a group of Indians in a conference with some white people under this spreading old tree. Even then, about 1840, it was 118 years old and today the old tree still stands, but gaunt limbs, creaked from the weight of years, attest to its great age.

The original home was a two-story log cabin built about 1790 by Daniel Ross. He was married to Mollie McDonald, daughter of John McDonald, a trader, and Anne Shorey, a half-breed de-

scendant of prominent Cherokees. All research and evidence points out that this house is the oldest original home in Alabama.

The architecture of the original home followed the pattern used by Indians and half-breeds who had already developed a relatively advanced civilization in this part of the state. In the accepted architectural design of those early days, there were two long rooms, one above the other.

*N*ine children were born to Daniel and Mollie Ross in the log cabin which later became the southeast room of the Cherokee

home. John Ross, their third child, became chief of the Cherokees although he was only one-eighth Indian. Daniel Ross founded probably the first school in the Cherokee nation at this home to educate his children. John B. Davis, who was approved by the Cherokee council, was then employed as the teacher. Sequoyah, the famous Indian scholar and teacher who originated the Cherokee alphabet, also taught school under the oak trees. Sequoyah has been honored by having Sequoyah National Park in California and Sequoyah Caverns named after him.

The Ross family occupied the two-story log cabin around 1790 until the early 1830's. William W. Macfarlane then bought the house and land including the oak grove in front of the house. However, it was 1845 before President James K. Polk granted the property to William W. Macfarlane under Patent No. 6292. From a study of the floor plan, it is evident that the Macfarlanes made the first additions to the log cabin, probably by enclosing the log cabin, adding what is now the library, the kitchen, the room behind the kitchen and improving the second floor of the log cabin.

When William W. Macfarlane died he left the property to his wife, Letitia Beeson Macfarlane, who was born December 11, 1808, and died June 26, 1889. Letitia Macfarlane deeded the property to her daughter, Cornelia, who married William J. Haralson in 1855. The W. J. Haralsons lived in the house for many years, at least until 1875. Judge W. W. Haralson, who practiced law and was a very prominent judge in Ft. Payne for most of his life, was raised at Cherokee.

*C*aptain Joe J. Nix, a Federal Army officer, purchased the property from Cornelia Macfarlane Haralson around 1885-90. He and his wife, Ella J., lived there only a short time and made no improvements. Major C. O. Godfrey, later to become the first mayor of Ft. Payne, bought the place and deeded it to his daughter-in-law, Mrs. H. R. (Mai) Godfrey about 1895. C. O. Godfrey came to Ft. Payne about 1878 hoping to find copper, but after many tests he discovered there was not enough copper to be mined commercially. He returned to Ft. Payne in 1889 and was

largely responsible for the real estate boom which started about that time. It is reported that he sold \$5,000,000 worth of stock in one month to New Englanders. This was about the time the old hotel, the Opera House which is now being restored, and the old Southern Railroad station, which is made of limestone and is in perfect condition even after years of constant use, were built.

C. O. Godfrey's son, H. R., promoted and constructed the telephone system in Ft. Payne. His wife, Mai, completed the



*Sequoyah  
1770? - 1843*

present additions to the house at Cherokee, including the wing on the east side and the upstairs bedrooms. They also added the first indoor bathroom in DeKalb County to the home. A water system which they installed piped water from a spring on top of the mountain to a tank about half a mile from the house and then on to the house. (This water system was still in operation in 1914 when C. G. Kershaw purchased the property.) The Godfreys also built a huge barn in 1895 after they purchased the place and on the west end of the barn was printed in huge letters, MAI-CLIFF FARMS. This barn is shown in one of the photographs.

Cherokee has never before nor since known such boom times until 1931 and again in 1969 when it was completely redecorated and restored. The Godfrey family not only made improvements to Cherokee that still exist today, but also played a prominent part in the development of Ft. Payne as evidenced by Godfrey Avenue which begins at First Street, extends northward to the City Limits and connects with Kershaw Road. Kershaw Road was named for C. G. Kershaw and ends at the entrance to Cherokee.

On June 20, 1902, H. R. and Mai Godfrey deeded the place to A. L. Campbell, maternal grandfather of Jeff Haralson and Mary Haralson Davenport of Ft. Payne. Mr. Campbell owned the place only a short time and in 1902 sold the property to T. F. Steele.

T. F. Steele and wife, Sally P., sold Cherokee on May 8, 1914, to C. G. Kershaw and wife, Rosa Mathis Kershaw, for \$5,750. "Miss Rosa" then changed the name from Mia-Cliff Farms to Cherokee. "Miss Rosa" also made the first major improvements in 1914 by adding the four colonial columns and porch to the front of the house. Cherokee was enjoyed by Mr. and Mrs. C. G. Kershaw and his six children, Roscoe, Otha, Royce, Hugh, Lillian and Knox, for many years as a summer home.

The second major improvement by the Kershaws was made in 1931 by Julia Lawrence Kershaw, who had married C. G. Kershaw in 1922. These improvements were the most extensive made since the house was constructed and included leveling all the floors, extra foundation supports, new windows with a bay window in the living room and dining room, French doors opening to the

yard from the living room, a bathroom in the upstairs, a west bedroom, a powder room near the kitchen, new servants' quarters and a garage. "Miss Julia" also spent months collecting antiques to furnish the house. After these modifications and refurbishings, it was considered one of the most tastefully furnished homes in DeKalb County.

The Kershaw family enjoyed this home as a weekend meeting place and particularly for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners planned by "Miss Julia" and prepared by Fanny the cook. The C. G. Kershaws made Cherokee their permanent home from 1936 until he died in 1946. "Miss Julia" sold the home shortly thereafter to settle the estate. C. T. Skidmore, Henry C. Christopher, Albert Hildebrandt, Kingsberry Homes and Pierre Noel also owned Cherokee at one time after 1946 and before it was purchased by Royce Kershaw, son of C. G. Kershaw. Mrs. Royce (Miriam) Kershaw completely redecorated and furnished the home in a summer-Mediterranean decor. All additions which had been made since the home was sold in 1946 were removed and the house restored to the condition and floor plan that was previously enjoyed by the Kershaws.

*by Royce Kershaw, Sr.*

*May, 1970*



*The entrance to Cherokee.*

# Owners through the Years

Daniel & Mollie Ross and John Ross  
1790? - 1835

William W. & Letitia Beeson Macfarlane  
1835 - 1855?

W. J. & Cornelia Macfarlane Haralson  
1855 - 1890?

Capt. Joe J. & Ella J. Nix  
1890? - 1895

Major C. O. & Sarah Williams Godfrey  
1895 - 1895

Mrs. H. R. (Mai) Godfrey  
1895 - 1902

A. L. & Cordelia Lyons Campbell  
1902 - 1911

T. F. & Sally P. Steele  
1911 - 1914

C. G. Kershaw  
1914 - 1946

Royce & Miriam Kershaw  
Present Owners



Letitia Ellison Beeson Macfarlane was born 14 miles west of Greensborough in Guilford County, North Carolina on the 11th of December 1808, and died at Ft. Payne, DeKalb County, Alabama, at 9 o'clock the 26th of June, 1889.

William W. Macfarlane was the first legal owner of Cherokee. When he died he left the home to his wife, Letitia.



Cornelia Macfarlane Haralson  
Born - 24 October 1834  
Died - 28 July 1890



Major C. O. Godfrey  
Born - 21 February 1833  
Died - 16 December 1900



Mrs. C. O. Godfrey  
(Sarah Lathrop Williams Godfrey)  
Born - 4 March 1833  
Died - 4 March 1902



Mrs. H. R. Godfrey  
Mai Godfrey  
Born - 20 May 1873  
Died - 25 June 1952



C. G. Kershaw  
Born - 28 June 1868  
Died - 17 April 1946



Mrs. C. G. Kershaw  
(Julia Lawrence Kershaw)



*John Ross  
Born about 1795*



*Mr. Royce Kershaw, Sr.*

Mr. & Mrs. Royce Kershaw, Sr. are active leaders in the civic and social circles throughout Alabama. They are lifetime members and directors of Landmarks of DeKalb County and Mr. Kershaw is a director of Landmarks Foundation of Montgomery.

Their hobbies include a fine collection of antique cars, an interest in genealogy and foreign languages. The restoration of "Cherokee" is an important contribution to the Ft. Payne area and to Alabama.



**THE CHEROKEE COUNTRY**  
ABOUT 1825

SCALE: One inch equals approximately eighteen miles  
 - - - - - Public Stations  
 \* - \* - \* Well-known Public Steps  
 FERRI  
 RAIL



*Mrs. Royce Kershaw Sr.*