

## HILLCREST

In November of 1898 the Dahlonega Consolidated Gold Mining Company was organized by some financiers from Ohio, Michigan and Tennessee. About 7000 acres of land with mineral rights were purchased in and around Dahlonega, and the company began the process of building the largest gold processing mill in the Eastern United States that eventually employed over 600 people. The company not only built the mill, but they also built a Commissary and the Mountain Lodge to house visiting stockholders and dignitaries. Some of the more permanent transplanted officers and managers of the company also built personal homes in Dahlonega. (Colvin 1901, pgs.10-11)

The house was originally built and occupied in 1899/1900 by R. C. Thomson of Delaware, Ohio who was one of the original officers and directors of the Dahlonega Consolidated Gold Mining Company. He bought the desirable land from Esther C. Hall, wife of Frank W. Hall who built the present day Smith House. (Lumpkin County, GA 1897-1899, p. 570) In the prospectus of the company Thomson is listed as being the Editor of the Delaware Gazette, a newspaper in Ohio. (*Announcement of the Dahlonega Consolidated Gold Mining Company, Dahlonega, Georgia, 1899*) He was active in the affairs of Ohio and was a member of the executive committee of Republican League Clubs of Ohio. (McNelley 1901) According to the *Dahlonega Nugget* of January 26, 1900 Thomson is one of the "northern gentlemen" who has located in Dahlonega, and he has "already built and now occupies the prettiest and most convenient dwelling in Dahlonega."

In 1901 Thomson sold the house and property to W. A. Charters for \$2500, and it was then known as the Charters Homeplace. (Lumpkin County, GA 1901-1903, p. 48) Colonel Charters, as he was known, came to Dahlonega from Virginia after graduating from Washington and Lee University Law School in 1883 at the age of 20. He remained in Dahlonega in a highly successful practice until 1907 when he moved to Gainesville, Georgia. While in Dahlonega he served as mayor in 1886 and in the Georgia Legislature from 1892-1893 and from 1896-1897. In 1899 he began a twelve-year term as the solicitor general for the Northeastern Circuit. He was also on the Board of Directors of the Dahlonega Consolidated Gold Mining Company. Charters married Belle Price,

daughter of the Honorable William P. Price, on June 3, 1886. Price served in the Georgia Legislature and in Congress, and he was the founder of North Georgia Agricultural College (now North Georgia College and State University). (Knight 1917, pgs. 3215-3216) In 1906 Charters moved to Gainesville, Georgia where he built a beautiful home on Green Street. That was the same year that the Consolidated Gold Mining Company went bankrupt. (Amerson 1992, p.136)

In 1908 Charters sold the land and house for \$2250 to Andrew J. Gurley of Hall County, Georgia. (Lumpkin County, GA 1908-1910, p. 166) Andrew was the brother of Hiram D. Gurley, a successful merchant in Dahlonega. The *Dahlonega Nugget* of April 9, 1909 listed the death of Andrew and said, "Last year Mr. Gurley purchased the Charters residence, one of the most substantial buildings in Dahlonega, expecting to locate here at some future time, but death has changed it all."

In 1913 Mrs. Andrew J. Gurley and her daughter, Nellie A. Gurley, sold the house to Henry Hyers of Pierce County, Georgia for \$5800. (Lumpkin County, GA 1912-1915, pgs. 302-303) The *Dahlonega Nugget* of October 17, 1913 states, "Mr. Hyers came up last Friday and after remaining a few hours returned by way of Gainesville where he went to close a trade with Mrs. Gurley of that place for her house here, which was built by Mr. Thomson, of Ohio, during the Consolidated boom. It is located on a high point of the Cooper Gap Road and is one of the most desirable places in Dahlonega..." It was during this time that the house was known as Hillcrest. Hyers was Vice-president of the Bank of Dahlonega when he located here. While living in Dahlonega, Hyers was elected Lumpkin County's representative to the Georgia State Legislature in 1919, and he was a Trustee of Schools in Dahlonega.

In May of 1919 Hyers sold the house and acreage to Mae Q. Meaders. (Lumpkin County, GA 1915-1923, pgs. 502-503) The Meaders family was prominent in Dahlonega serving as postmasters, merchants, and bankers and in other civic endeavors. The *Dahlonega Nugget* of May 30, 1919 states, "Mr. H. Hyers has sold his large beautiful residence to Mr. Frank Meaders and gives possession the first of August. The lot contains many kinds of fruit trees, grapes, etc., and is a most desirable place to live." Jack Q. Meaders, Jr. said that his grandmother, Mae, was very artistic, and her art work hung

in the house. Mae Meaders died on May 17, 1930 as a result of a fall in her house.

(Meaders interview, August 10, 2009)

The property remained in the Meaders family until it was sold by the husband and sons of Mae Meaders in January 1945 to Joe W. Woodward and Edison Woodward of Dahlonega. (Lumpkin County, GA 1948-1950, p. 163) In 1948 Edison sold his part of the property to Joe W. Woodward who became the sole owner. (Lumpkin County, GA 1948-1950, pgs. 165-166) Joe and his wife lived in the house and rented rooms to students from North Georgia College. (Palmer interview, July 30, 2009) Joe Woodward served as Mayor of Dahlonega for ten years and was a director of the Dahlonega Water Works. A life long resident of Lumpkin County, he died at age 65 in 1964. (*Daily Times*, November 8, 1964)

In February of 1949 Joe Woodward sold the property to George M. Potter and Helen Jackson Potter. (Lumpkin County, GA 1948-1950, p. 265) The Potters had returned to Dahlonega after his retirement from the Military. He had served on the Military faculty at North Georgia College, and Helen was a native of Dahlonega. Helen Potter taught in the Lumpkin County School system, and some of her students recall visiting in her home. They describe many fruit trees on the property and playing with the three Potter children. (Adams interview, July 15, 2009) (Grindle interview, July 24, 2009)

The property changed hands again in February of 1957 when the Potters sold it to Hubert Vickers of Hall County. (Lumpkin County, GA 1956-1957, p. 526) Vickers was the owner of Vickers Funeral Home of Dahlonega, which had been operating out of the former Littlefield Funeral Home close by. (Anderson interview, August 15, 2009) At that time the house became a mortuary operated by Vickers.

Forrest J. Sisk and John H. Vickers, Jr. bought the property and all the funeral equipment in 1975 from Hubert Vickers. (Lumpkin County, GA 1975, p. 766) Again in 1977 the title was transferred to Vickers-Sisk Funeral Home, Inc at the time of the incorporation of the business. (Lumpkin County, GA 1980, p. 249) During this time (about 1980) a small shed was added behind the Funeral Home, and later the driveway and parking lot were paved with asphalt.

Vickers-Sisk Funeral Home, Inc. dissolved and February 19, 2003 the business and property were sold to Bradley McKinney, Inc. (Lumpkin County, GA February 2003, pgs. 504-505) It was then known as McKinney Funeral Home.

The McKinney Funeral Home closed April 3, 2007 due to a foreclosure by United Community Bank. (Lumpkin county, GA April 2007, p. 418) The City of Dahlonega purchased the property on June 8, 2007 with the intent of remodeling and adding on to the house for a new City Hall Building. (Lumpkin County, GA June 207 p. 659)

After deliberations, the City of Dahlonega sold the property to F. Welch Investments, LLC (Lumpkin County, GA December 2008-January 2009, pgs 678-680) The Welch family owns The Smith House, one of the Historic Hotels of America. It is interesting to note that Esther C. Hall, who sold the property to R.C. Thomson, was the wife of Frank W. Hall, who built The Smith House.

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