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DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESTON HOME
Trimble County

The Preston home originally known as the Old Norfolk Plantation before it was purchased by John and Mary Howard Preston, and owned for the past twenty-nine years by Mr. James L. Rodgers the present owner, is located five miles from Milton on Pecks Pike.

The road leading to the home needs work and in its present condition would be rather discouraging to visitors.

The gate leading into the grounds proper is flanked on each side by large concrete posts. As one approaches the home the first thing seen is the site of the former slave quarters, most of which have been torn down. The last remaining one, a picturesque three room log cabin is also being razed by the present owner.

In the large yard which is dotted here and there with beautiful maple and sugar trees there are many out buildings still standing, namely, the overseers house, the building used as a school and chapel, office, saddle and harness room, tool house, smoke house, etc.

Of these buildings the architecture of the smoke house is the most outstanding being a tall brick building about 20 x 20 with four tiers of poles, which was built to hold a hundred head of hogs after they were butchered. The original key, a huge iron one, is still used to open the door. There are no windows in the building and the only light furnished, other than by the door, is through several small openings covered with iron grating, at the top of the building. In the center of the dirt

floor is a huge pit where hickory logs burned for days to smoke meats to just the right ^{flavor} ~~constituency~~.

The brick building now used as a residence for tenants which was built by Mrs. Preston for a chapel and school still stands and remains in a good state of preservation. It was because of this school, known as Norfolk school, that Mrs. Preston, a devout Catholic, willed her property to the Catholic Church to be taken care under the direction of St. Meinrads Abbey- believing that in this way she could best render a service to humanity.

Near the house stands a small brick building, which housed in Mrs. Preston's life time, a bake oven where the huge amount of baking was done, necessary for the maintenance of her large household.

The house itself is of colonial type, having large pillars in front. The front part is a two story structure with an ell added that gives it a very rambling appearance. There are fifteen rooms, including the large halls. The two front rooms on the lower floor, used originally as double parlors, have fifteen foot ceilings. The woodwork around the huge doors and windows is inlaid with a narrow stripe of gold leaf, which still glistens with its former luster. The silver plated door knobs, although showing the wear of the last half century, still contribute much to the former grandeur of the home. The walls contain the original hand painted decorations but at present need redecorating.

The present owner of the home has had hardwood floors laid in all the rooms, although in the double parlors there remains the outer inlaid border, which surrounded the beautiful carpets, that were used during Mrs. Prestons life time. The wood used in this border came from trees grown on the plantation.

The two bed rooms above the parlors which are reached by a beautiful half spiral stairway, have low ceilings and are connected by a hall. The small room at the end of this hall is said to have been used by the resident priest as a confession room.

As this house was used only as a summer home by Mrs. Preston, who lived in Louisville during the winter months, it is rather difficult to heat.

The front rooms of the house are of brick but due to the fact that Mrs. Preston thought brick houses were unhealthy she had these rooms plastered on the outside and weatherboarded.

When Mrs. Preston willed her plantation of twenty-three hundred acres of land to the Catholic Church it was contested by her heirs and broken. In 1897 the place was divided into over twenty farms and sold at public auction. When the abolition spirit broke the farm was given over by the Prestons to the cause of the negro, although they were large owners of slaves. Della Webster used their home as an "underground railway station." It is claimed that it was here that Eva, of Uncle Tom's Cabin fame, was housed after she fled from the blue grass section.

Those who love communion with God through trees, running waters, and hills that tower in magnificence, may go there and find solace and contentment. There, in fancy, you can still hear the priest in the chapel murmuring their prayers and there you will find still the typical old southern plantation.

Bibliography

Personal interview with Mrs. James L. Rodgers, Milton, Kentucky.

Sketch - "Norfolk" - The Preston Place, by Byron Bacon Black, published in the Bedford High School Journal, "The Elbmirt" 1916.