



## Sallie Lee

Gets A Facelift ... and A New Life

By Judy Hamill

The  
Preservation  
Society &  
of Asheville  
Buncombe County

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## Sallie Lee Gets A Facelift . . .

Just over two years ago, the Preservation Society worked with a group of concerned civic groups to move and save a treasured house—the Sallie Lee Cottage. It was moved from a once thriving neighborhood along Asheland Avenue to 18 Short Street in the Montford historical district. Sallie has a new owner as well, who has given her new life!

Here's a brief history of this intriguing home...The Sallie Lee Cottage was one of 25 homes built in 1878 in a downtown area that would soon after become the residential Asheville neighborhood of the 1880s.



**Sallie Lee -- Before Restoration**

The developers, Cocke & Jones and Johnston & Shuford — an attorney partnership — made a savvy business decision in building this





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neighborhood. It wasn't too long before railroad construction to Asheville was complete, and the grand hotel built by Grove, the Battery Park, opened its doors to flocks of visitors descending upon this increasingly popular mountain town..

Within a year of registering the plan for this development, on July 21, 1879, Sarah (Sallie) Lee bought Lot 21. This was on the west side of Bailey Street, five lots south of Patton Avenue and three lots north of Phillip (Hilliard) Street. She paid \$475 for the lot, and sold it the following August for \$3100 to J.C. Newland and his wife Laura.

Since H.H. Lyons had paid \$900 for the adjoining lot #22 a few months earlier, Sallie evidently built a spec house on the property. What is interesting is that she seems to have done this on her own -- there is no reference to her husband, James Hardy Lee, in this transaction.





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James Hardy Lee, a pharmacist, married Sallie Hatch and moved into a brick house on Grove Street. Sallie's father, Lewis Melvin Hatch, came from a prominent New England family and went to Charleston, SC, to pursue the family business.

During the Civil War, he sided with the Confederacy and lost much of his wealth. The family had come to Flat Rock to escape the unhealthy hot summers in the low country and bought an extensive tract of land extending from their home in Bent Creek to Mount Pisgah.

As the years passed and after all their children were gone, they found life in the country increasingly difficult. So in 1885, the Hatches moved into Asheville and lived out their lives at 94 Bailey Street. Thus, the years that the Lees spent in the Bailey St. (Asheland) house were significant.

They later moved to Liberty Street (162 Chestnut), and James Hardy Lee went into the insurance business. As an interesting





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aside, their son, L. Lyons Lee, was mayor of Asheville (1941–1947) during World War II.

The next owners of the Sallie Lee Cottage were the mysterious Newlands. J.C. and Laura Newland bought the property from Sallie Lee in August 1880 for \$3100 and sold it back to her in March of 1883 for \$3200.

Asheville was booming – the population had increased 48% in the three years they had owned the Bailey Street property. Moreover, since 1870 the population had increased 200% and wealth 400%. The Spartanburg-Asheville Railroad opened in September of 1883 when there were 100 buildings under construction.

When Sallie sold the next time, her husband, James Hardy Lee, was included on the deed as grantor. This time, they had held the property a little over two years, until May of 1885, and sold it to a group of out-of-towners: John Hart, William and David Davenport and their wives.





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This group kept the Bailey Street property for over 20 years, until October 1905. The sale by the Lees to the Harts/Davenports appears to be the transaction by which the property was divided. The deed references Sallie Lee's "original" lot and the 1886 map shows a faint line between 73 and 77 Bailey (63 and 71 Asheland). Unfortunately, there was no sales price included in the deed.

In the 1920s many people began moving out of town into suburban areas and the county. At that time, many of the properties on Bailey Street became rental houses.

Slowly and steadily, Ashland developed into a commercial district. The Sallie Lee Cottage was one of the last residential holdouts.

Macy Harrison was the last tenant of the house, renting it for about 30 years. When Harrison moved into the cottage, many of the properties on Asheland had deteriorated; and vagrants were often in the area. This did not bother Harrison.





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Her kindness to the vagrants and others who spent much of their time walking her street earned her the name “Mama.” When the property was bought, Harrison moved in with her son in Montford. She says she misses the little cottage.

### **Moving to Montford...**

Because of the expansion of the Job Securities Building, the Sallie Lee was in danger of demolition. The developers, BOC Enterprises, purchased the house and donated it to the Preservation Society with the stipulation that it be moved.



**Sallie Lee - After Restoration**

The Preservation Society’s Revolving Fund (through the Community

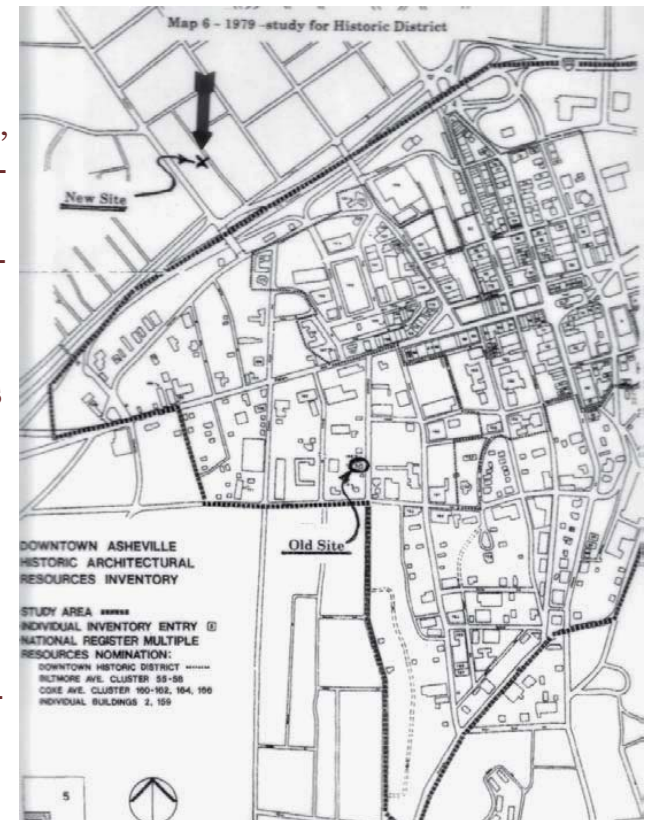




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Foundation) was used to purchase the new lot on Short Street, build a new foundation, and cover the expenses of moving. The move took place on October 7, 2001. The Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County was the lead group of six organizations working to save the house.

The Historic Resources Commission of Asheville and Buncombe County supported and encouraged the relocation of the house to the Montford Historic District. Their authority to invoke flexible design stan-



Old & New Sites for Sallie Lee





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dards helped the Preservation Society work out the difficult details of the new site, where portions of two lots were combined.

On the night of the move, there was a celebration to commemorate the event. At the end of the ceremony, Mayor Leni Sitnick broke a bottle of champagne on the house and turned on white holiday lights before it began its journey to the new location on Short Street.

Although the celebration began at 5PM, the house could not actually begin moving until 10PM when power lines, traffic lights and other obstructions could be taken down. The move took over eight hours.

One eyewitness recounts the cottage sitting in the middle of Patton Avenue at about 2 AM, when the bars closed down. All lit up like a Christmas tree, it waited while the crews took down and put back the traffic lights for the left onto and right off of Patton Avenue.





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The revelers from Jack of the Wood pub were in command of various level of observation. One, evidently preoccupied as he hurried off on his bicycle, did such a double take that he almost fell over.

The Sallie Lee Cottage was sold – with restrictive covenants and a rehabilitation agreement – in October 2002, about a year after it was moved. Judy Hamill is the owner of 18 Short Street; she plans to rent the house.





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For membership information in The Preservation Society,  
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visit our website at [www.psabc.org](http://www.psabc.org), to obtain a  
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