

Fitzgerald Living

MAGAZINE



The

Dorminy-Massee House

Keeping family memories and traditions alive.

also...

Miracle on Meadowlark Lane

DR. BILL HAMMOND ASKED GOD FOR HEALING SO THAT HIS LIFE COULD BE A LIVING TESTIMONY.

Life Lessons

MRS. BERNICE STREET HAS BEEN HELPING FITZGERALD YOUTH FOR OVER 40 YEARS

My Hero Pop

A GRANDSON'S TRIBUTE TO A MAN WHOSE LIFE INSPIRES OTHERS.

HOMETOWN LIVING AT ITS BEST



PRESERVING *Family & Home*

The Dorminy-Massee House
Bed & Breakfast

BY TERI R. WILLIAMS



Eulalie turned her car back into the driveway. The turnip greens she and Beatrice had brought back from her son, Marion's, garden would soon be simmering in a pot for supper.

Even though one was the employee of the other, it made no difference. They had long ago become best friends. Born in 1892, Beatrice had been hired in 1915 by J. J. (Captain Jack) Dorminy, Eulalie's father, to help him and his wife, Rachel, with their four daughters when they moved from Broxton to Fitzgerald. Before they got out of the car with the greens that fateful day in 1974, Beatrice Gibson suffered a fatal heart attack. After fifty-nine years together, Eulalie Dorminy Masseur lost her best friend. Standing in front of the Dorminy-Masseur Bed and Breakfast, I couldn't help but wonder if the friendship and love that has been shared in this house is the reason it continues to stand.

The Carriage House where Beatrice first lived in an upstairs apartment still stands behind the main house next to the cow barn, the smoke house, and the chicken house. When Captain Jack's wife, Rachel, died, she bequeathed to Beatrice a house of her own. After Captain Jack died in 1952, Eulalie obtained her sisters' shares in the house. Together she and Beatrice kept the house in good condition.



*The Carriage House
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The Chicken House

The two-story colonial style house contains a myriad of priceless memories for the Dorminy-Massee family. They would all gather together for Sunday dinner each week when Captain Jack and his wife, Rachel, were still there. As was the custom of the day, Eulalie came back to her home to give birth to her son, Marion. Such times were not faced alone. This house gives proof to the value of family. Marion's son, Mark, still recalls holidays and special events with the family all together in more recent years.

The home of the past was a place where family members and sometimes friends lived and cared for one another. Everyone sat at the same table for meals. It was the place for both birthing and dying. Mark remembers "spend the night" adventures with his cousins on what was known as the "sleeping porch." Originally, a sleeping porch was a screened in area on the second floor in the back of the house that was common to larger homes. Its purpose was to provide a place to sleep where one might catch a breeze on hot summer nights.

The big white house with the Corinthian style columns still personifies the importance of family relationships and friendship to the Massee clan. Following Eulalie's death in 1995, Marion and his son, Mark, acquired the house from the estate. Although no one was able to live there at that time, they concluded that they didn't want to let it go either. After careful consideration, Marion and his wife, Joyce, along with Mark and his wife, Sherry, made the decision to renovate the house and turn it into a Bed and Breakfast.

The family was delighted to discover the original house plans in the archives of the architect who designed the home for Captain Jack. Marion headed up the renovations and he and his son, Mark, got to work. The original woodwork was in such good shape that refinishing it was unnecessary. Mark and Sherry brought pieces of furniture they had inherited from his grandmother back into



The Smoke House and the Cow Barn behind it.



Captain Jack had saved all of the material left over from the house. There was not only extra trim but extra transoms as well, all of which had miraculously escaped damage.



the house and other furniture found stored away in the buildings out back were carefully restored adding character and atmosphere of the house.

The massive doors, including the large sliding pocket doors that provide a sort of privacy between the downstairs rooms when needed as well as the front door with beveled glass, are original. The same candelabras that hung in the house in 1915 remain. The ancient light switches seem strangely foreign. And the coal burning fireplaces all have original tile flanked by scroll columns. There is still a bit of coal in the cow barn where it was once kept.

Cooking was done on a wood stove in the kitchen, which was separated from the main house by a screened porch. The kitchen was updated to include more modern amenities later on. Between the kitchen and the room originally used for the dining area was the Butler's pantry. A beautiful built-in china cabinet rises on one side with various compartments for storage. Trays of food were kept here just outside of the dining room to be quickly accessible when entertaining guests.

One of the main jobs that had to be undertaken was to add bedrooms and baths to the upstairs. A total of five and a half baths had to be added for the convenience of guests. As the upstairs was restructured, doors had to be moved. All of the original doors had transoms, which was how the rooms were ventilated. When Marion had to add a door to an upstairs room, he figured they would have to do without a matching transom. He also realized that he would need to find new trim to match the old. But when he went back into the old cow barn, Marion discovered that his grandfather, Captain Jack, had saved all of the material left over from the house. There was not only extra trim but extra transoms as well, all of which had miraculously escaped damage.

The sleeping porch was enclosed for two of the bedrooms. One is named the Lee-Grant Room, which are names uniquely brought together by the city of Fitzgerald and often seen side-by-side; the other is named the P. H. Fitzgerald Room. P. H. Fitzgerald was the Indianapolis newspaper editor who had the vision for bringing veterans from the north to the south and for whom the





Lady of The House

Eulalie Dorminy-Massee (pictured above at her wedding and to the left) inherited the house when her father, Captain Jack, died.

She and Beatrice Wilson kept the house in good condition until Beatrice passed away in 1974.

Eulalie lived in the house until 1995 when she passed away.

city of Fitzgerald is named. A comfortable sitting area divides the two.

Mark's mother, Joyce, and his wife, Sherry, decorated all the rooms. The remaining rooms are named: the Blue-Gray Room, which is dedicated to veterans from both sides of the Civil War; the Jefferson Davis Room in remembrance of the President of the Confederacy who was captured about eleven miles from Fitzgerald; Eulalie's Room, which displays some of the big hats she loved to wear and also contains pictures of her as a young woman. This bedroom is also serviced by one of the two original upstairs bathrooms with its white ceramic tile floors and large porcelain fixtures; The Colony Room in which hangs a portrait of Captain Jack's father, Willis Dorminy; and Miss Rachel's Room, named for the first mistress of the Dorminy-Massee House.

Local artists also contributed their work to the Dorminy-Massee House. Randy Anthony's carving of a Union and a Confederate soldier graces the mantle in the Blue-Gray Room. Paintings by various artists are displayed throughout the rooms and hallways including the works of Pauline Morris, Jessie Cumby, Ronald Goodman and Ruth Cowan. There are also three of Eulalie's own framed works of needlepoint on display. Heidi Wimbush also

added her talent to some of the fire screens that she repainted with flowers native to the area.

The Dorminy-Massee House Bed and Breakfast opened to the public in April 1997. It wasn't until Mark and Sherry's three children were grown and out on their own that they decided to move into the house. In December 2007, they came to live in the house that had been home to the Dorminy and Massee families for almost a hundred years. On May 26, 2000, the Dorminy-Massee house was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Guests to the home have come from as far away as Texas, California, and England. The Massees have enjoyed sharing their home with many wonderful guests including Dr. Ben Carson, Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital; Vince Dooley, former head football coach at the University of Georgia; and gospel singer Larnelle Harris. Through the years the Massees have had many who return to the inn year after year. Mark and Sherry have also found that they particularly appreciate the chance to meet ordinary people who are each one unique and individually exceptional.

Pictures on a table in the front parlor from Eulalie's wedding on November 4, 1924, and held on the front lawn of the Dorminy-Massee house embellish the sense of time and place. Captain Jack can be seen

The Dining Room





ABOVE Mark and Sherry Masee are the current owners of the Dorminy-Massee House. They have three children: Jacob (an Attorney in Savannah, GA.); Luke (who works in the Student Affairs Office at Georgia Tech); Elizabeth, (who is an educator and is married to Dr. Chase Brooks, a Dentist in Blakely, GA.; they are expecting their first child in September). **RIGHT** Joyce and Marion Masee.



*For more information on the
Dorminy-Massee House Bed and Breakfast,
visit: www.dorminymasseehouse.com
or call (229) 423-3123*

proudly standing beside his daughter. Little did anyone know that the ring bearer in the picture would grow up to marry Eulalie's daughter. (He just celebrated his 90th Birthday.) In the former dining room, which now serves as Mark's office, there is a striking wedding picture of Elizabeth, Mark and Sherry's daughter. String lights from their daughter's wedding reception remain draped across the lawn as a part of the landscape. There could have been no more appropriate setting for such an event than here among the memories of their ancestors.

The Massees recognize the value of The Dorminy-Massee House as a vital part of the history of the community. After thirty-one years of marriage, they help to represent the beauty of home in a period of time when maintaining family relationships has become more difficult than ever.

In the evenings, Mark and Sherry will sometimes sit out on the second level porch overlooking the street below and watch the people of Fitzgerald pass by. They can see the camellias, which were likely first planted by Captain Jack and his wife, Rachel, out *in the yard*.

James Carson, who worked with Mark's Grandmother, Eulalie, (and is well into his late seventies), along with a couple of other men, still help to keep the yard in excellent condition. "James," said Sherry, "is constant, steady, and loyal." Much like the house, I think to myself, and the family who continue to call the Dorminy-Massee house their home. †FLM

The Gazebo

