

History of Old Sumner Fairvue, Part One – The Franklin Era

From the prehistoric stone-grave natives to today's beautiful development, it's hard to name a more scenic or historic area than the first Bluegrass district of Tennessee.

Centuries ago the Woodlands Indians chose these rich creek bottoms to hunt, farm and bury their dead in stone-lined graves. When the first pioneers came in the 1770s, they chose the same rich lands along a creek they named Station Camp, after the earliest hunters' shelters. Five Franklin brothers claimed the best of the land, and built their substantial homes along the creek, sheltering in the shadow of a promontory that river travelers knew as Pilot's Knob. One brother gained fame throughout the South, grew extremely rich and built a spectacular mansion as a crown for his two thousand fertile acres. He called it Fairvue.



But beautiful Fairvue has a dark side, for it was built on the backs of humans sold in bondage. Isaac Franklin was the largest slave trader in America.

The old Buffalo trace that ran in front of the house became the main stage route for traversing Cumberland country. Along it came one day the lovely Adelia Hayes from Nashville, bound to see friends in Gallatin. Forced to take shelter from a storm in the mansion, whose owner was away at the time, she took a look around and announced, "I set my cap for the master of this house"

Franklin was twenty-eight years her senior, but they had eleven years and four children together. Unfortunately, none of them survived to live as adults, and Isaac's will, which left Adelia rich, but bequeathed the remainder to found an academy for the poor students of Sumner County, was broken in Louisiana courts, which ruled it a perpetuity. Adelia took the money and built, with her second husband, Belmont Mansion in Nashville, which today is the centerpiece of the college. Isaac's magnificent tomb, like

his fortune, was built on sand, and tumbled away. The Civil War saw both Fairvue as well as Adelia's Belmont occupied by the Yankees, but she managed to convert her cotton to gold, which she removed to London. Adelia became one of the wealthiest women of the South, eventually selling both Fairvue and Belmont and moving to Washington, D.C. After three husbands and ten children, she died at the age of seventy, while on a shopping trip to New York City.

The slave-hewn limestone blocks of Isaac's ruined tomb are featured today in the entrance gates to the Fairvue Plantation development.



Franklin's End