

THE DEKALB NEW ERA - Thursday, February 20, 1969 - 3

# Old Sage Home Coming Down, Shopping Center Will Rise

by Martha Frances Brown  
Dekalbies driving toward Atlanta on Briarcliff Road last week did a double take when they saw, high on a hill just beyond Clifton Road, an enormous frame house which had never been there before.

Or at least most people thought it hadn't been there. Actually the old structure was built nearly 75 years ago. It has been hidden, however by a heavy forest of trees. Thousands of cars had passed at the base of the hill and never suspected that at its crest was situated what may have been the largest house in Dekalb County.

The big old frame structure of 27 rooms became visible when the owners, Shepherd Construction Company, began cutting down trees and shrubs around it. Mr. Clyde Shepherd this week told some of the history of the house which was built when his mother was a very small child. She thinks she vaguely remembers the cutting of trees at the top of the hill for the situation of the house.

The house, a rambling old thing which looks more like a summer hotel than a private residence, was built by the late Ira Sage of Atlanta for a summer home. He and his family lived on Peachtree Street in Atlanta during the winters, but when summer came they moved to Dekalb County

one family.

Mr. Hoch's pride was the fine piece of land on which the house stood. The big porch, and front of the house, actually overlooked the creek and mill below. Then came the day when Briarcliff Road, merely a little trail at the back of his land, was to be widened by the State Highway Department.

Shepherd Construction Company had the contract for the widening. But when they reached the Hoch property, the construction workers ran into problems. The owner refused to allow them to come on his land. He even stopped them with a gun as they tried to go ahead with the widening of the road. Scott Candler was Commissioner at that time, and he

went over and talked to Mr. Hoch and the matter was settled. Briarcliff Road was widened and cut through Mr. Hoch's property, but he always felt it ruined his land. Entry to the house was cut from Briarcliff, while the house faced down on Clifton.

The house had beautiful sh-rubbery, Mr. Clyde Shepherd remembered this week. The crepe myrtle trees were so old the trunks were as big as a man's waist. There was a swimming pool with water pumped up from the creek and the tremendous round porch at the side of the house was screened and a favorite rocking place for visitors.

Shepherd Construction Company will build a shopping cen-

ter there which will be called, "Sage Hill."  
"It really was too bad to tear the old place down," Mr. Shepherd said, "but it was not a fine house and was in bad repair. It didn't have the beautiful mill work of many places built in that era. It was built as a summer home.

About the only thing which the company was able to salvage were the 20 or more pillars which went around the porch at the side of the house.

The columns were of solid wood, as were the caps, not like columns of today, which are hollow. A few mantels, banisters and newell posts, but mostly the old house will go up in flames because the timber which went into it was not especially fine.

Mr. Candler, in talking about the place remembered one more story.

"Maury Mable, who used to be the fire chief here, was up there surveying and went in a

cave and found a Cherokee Indian tomahawk. The weapon is made of red granite and the stone is tied to the handle with rawhide which is as good today as when it was made. Even the stitches seem strong and secure."

The stone is red granite, Mr. Candler says while there is some red granite at Stone Mountain it is not like this weapon, and he believes the Indians made it far away. The relic was given to Mr. Candler by Mr. Mable, and the former Commissioner keeps it in the safe of the Maud Burrus Library. He is chairman of the Dekalb County Library Board.

Smoke was rising over Sage Hill this week, as it did long ago from Indian fires. But now it is the shrubbery and brush and a tremendous old house that are burning. Soon the hill will be lowered and a shopping center built there, and all evidence of early life in Dekalb will disappear.



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Scott Candler, former DeKalb County Commissioner of Roads and Revenues and a DeKalb native, remembers the house then.

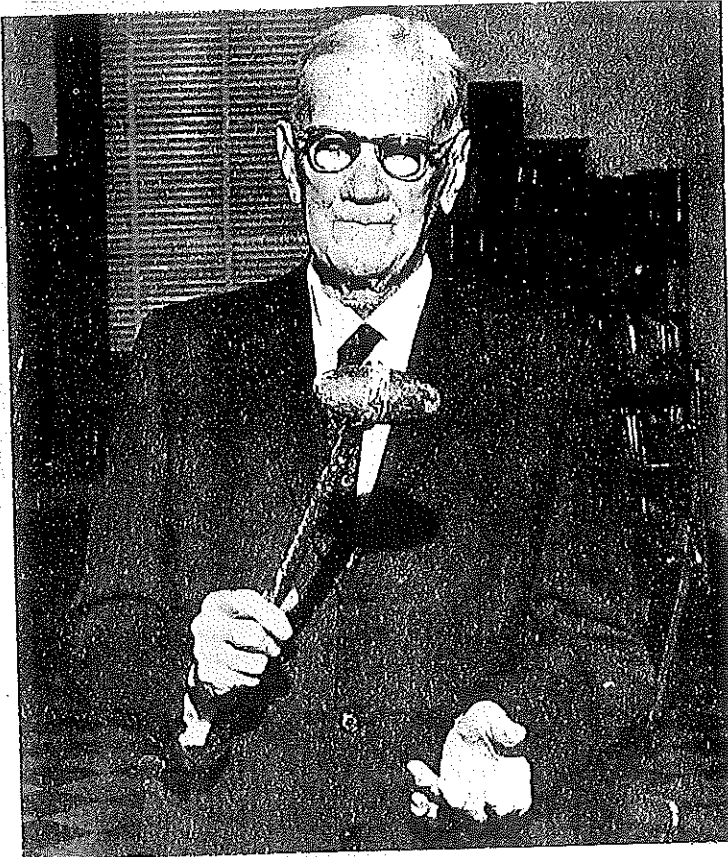
"We always went to Watson's Mill for our picnics," Mr. Candler relates. "That was a favorite gathering place for the young people. While we were enjoying our simple pleasure along the creek, the Atlanta folks were frolicing up on the hill and looking down at us."

The Sages spent long summers up on the hill, enjoying the three porches, and entertaining extensively in the multitude of rooms. Mrs. Shepherd recalls visiting in the house and seeing one filled with beautiful china on display.

The Sages grew older, the engineer and his wife found the keeping of two homes burdensome. They gave up the Peachtree Street house, however, and moved into the Kimball House in winter. In summer they kept returning to their hilltop home and the house was still known for wonderful parties. Atlantans loved to drive out from town to spend the weekend in the country with the Sages.

When finally the country place did get to be too great a responsibility for Mr. and Mrs. Sage it was sold to Godfrey Hoch. Mr. Hoch and his wife put in five bathrooms some of them modernizing older rooms which were in the house at its construction.

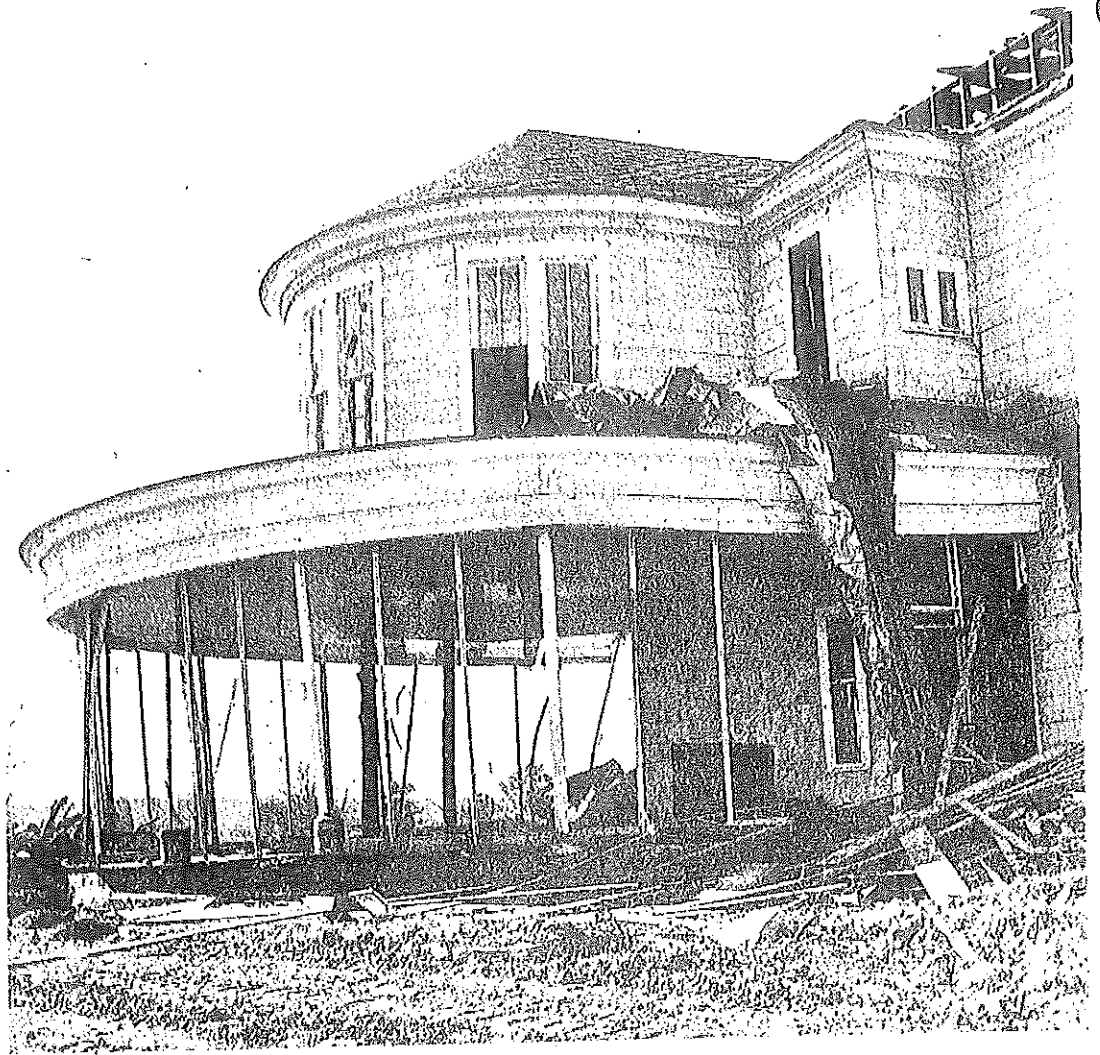
Living with the Hochs were their children, sisters and brothers. As the children grew up, each was given his own apartment in the house, as were the relatives. Each had his own electric meter, and the old home really became an apartment house even though its residents were all members of



SCOTT CANDLER LOOKS AT INDIAN RELICS

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Rotunda porch of old house was once surrounded with columns

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