
HOMES FIT FOR KINGS

BY CHARLES F. UPCHURCH



The Cary "Cap" King house.

Along Gentleman's Ridge, on Park Springs Road between Locust Hill and Pelham, stands four stately old homes that share a common background. Each was once owned by a son of William and Ann King. These four sons, Robert, Cary, Lemuel, and Scott, were area farmers who also founded and operated King Brothers Tobacco Company. This company, whose factory was located at Blackwell, just off Park Springs Road in Pelham Township, operated successfully from 1893 til 1906. Here, some 15-20 were

employed processing chewing tobacco for distribution throughout the South. According to Cary King, the increase in popularity of cigarettes caused a drop in chewing tobacco sales, and King Tobacco Company went out of business after thirteen years.

The King brothers grew tobacco on farms located within three miles of the factory and oversaw the entire operation from seed to finished product. Miss Ola King, who now resides in the former home of Lemuel King, recalls that, as a child she and others

would go to the factory to listen to the workers, who sang as they mixed the molasses and other ingredients, tramping over and over the mix in their bare feet.

The eldest brother Cary "Cap" King lived for seventy years at his Gentleman's Ridge home, now called The King Farm, located about two miles from Casville. Dr. and Mrs. Steve Upchurch presently own this farm, as well as the Lemuel King farm, (with the exception of the

Lem King home place). Besides farming and the tobacco business, "Cap" King was partner to Hugh Cobb in a fertilizer agency, served on the Caswell Board of Education, and was a member of the North Carolina Senate from 1907-1908. "Cap" was quick to note that for his service in the senate, he was paid \$4.00 per day (for a period not to exceed 60 days), plus one way transportation to Raleigh.

The original section of the "Cap"

Older section of "Cap" King's house, with added kitchen, foreground





Above: The Lemuel King home.

Below: Miss Ola King checks the author's notes.

King House is believed to date from circa 1870, and has a hand dug cellar where the cooking was done until the later addition of a kitchen. In her book *AN INVENTORY OF HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE, CASWELL COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA*, author Ruth Little-Stokes asserts that remodeling and the addition of porches and porticoes detract from the architectural integrity of old structures, but we are not dealing with museums and national treasures, we are examining people's homes, and peo-

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This Bay window is one of the interesting features in the architecture of the Lemuel King home.



The Scott King house has been lavishly refurbished with added wings and increased living area in the main building.

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ple's needs change over the years. Thus, additions such as the kitchen, bedrooms, and porch added to the "Cap" King house can often enhance the appearance of a home and have practical benefits as well.

Approximately one mile from the "Cap" King House, on the opposite side of Park Springs Road, stands the Lemuel King Home, the newest of the four. Built early

in this century, this home displays distinctive architectural details rare to Caswell County, including a fanlighted front entrance, arched windows, bay window and open staircase.

When patriarch William David King died, he left each of his sons approximately 200 acres of land. The Lemuel King home, as stated above, was detached from the original farm and stands on a five

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The Robert King home, Former site of the Blackwell Post Office.



Rear view of the Robert King home.

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acre lot, but the other parcels are intact under their present owners.

The third home in our series is located on Big Oak Farm Road and was the home of Scott King, youngest of the King brothers. Presently owned by Daniel and Barbara Brown, it is a fine example of preservation, remodeling, and restoration. The structure displays interesting features of the original early 1800's house coupled with dramatic additions,

including a new recreation area and wood shop, both accessible by way of arched arcades attached to either side of the house. With the further addition of a large swimming pool and four-car garage, the Browns have created the environment of an elegant country estate.

The final home of our small tour is the circa 1875 home of the eldest King son, Robert, and is located near the site of the for-

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mer King's Store, at Blackwell, on Park Springs Road. Thought to be a stagecoach stop at one time, this building also housed the Blackwell Post Office for a period. Caretaker Percy Thompson explained that the home is now owned by Robert King's twin granddaughters, who presently reside in Roanoke. Featuring bracketed cornices, ornamental knees on its porch columns, and a well-preserved general condition. The Robert King home has been unoccupied except for occasional stays by caretaker Thompson.

We would like to credit the individuals who have taken the time and money necessary to preserve, maintain, and restore these graceful glimpses into Caswell County's past.

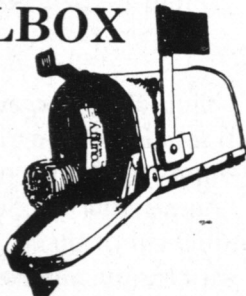
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output recently. However, in addition to his academic writing, Carter manages to crank out both poetry and short stories. Carter's "The Girl in The Room" won second place in the short story competition in the 1982 Fine Arts Festival; his "Hello Old Friend" took second place in the short story competition in 1983 while his poem "Edenaid" won first place.

The above-mentioned writers certainly do not constitute all of Eden's writers but they are an active force in Eden's literary output. Indeed, the present writer hopes that this brief essay will find other Eden writers whose names do not appear in this essay and that they will tell the community about their contributions to literature. *Tempus fugit.*

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would love to hear from its readers. Comments, story ideas, and suggestions are always welcome. Address your letters to:

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