

In Lexington, Ashland Is Rebuilt

Description

By Wendy Bright

In 1852, James Brown Clay enlisted local architect Thomas Lewinski to design a new structure at Ashland, adapting it to their time and aesthetics. By early 1857, it was complete. Lewinski managed a complex architectural feat by integrating the original Latrobe design with the more modern Italianate and Greek Revival.

Lewinski replicated the original house by building upon the original foundation, utilizing original materials, and retaining the original proportions, massing, and arrangement of space. But the new structure—now of high quality red brick — featured elongated, browed Italianate windows, enlarged cornices with brackets, elaborated chimneys, rusticated quoins, and iron balconies and porches.

When Henry Clay's granddaughter, Anne Clay McDowell, and her family came to Ashland in the 1880s, it was time to update the thirty-year-old mansion. While they made no major exterior changes (except the addition of a conservatory), they made some dramatic structural changes within, such as the removal of walls, replacement and addition of staircases, and the inclusion of such modern amenities as gas lighting, central heating, and indoor plumbing.

The McDowells envisioned Ashland as a modern place of beauty, both of form and function, transforming the mansion into a *fin de siècle* showcase of sophistication as they embraced a mix of decorative styles: the late-Victorian and Eastlake styles, but particularly the Aesthetic Style popular at the end of the nineteenth century. While the foundational contributions of Henry Clay and James Clay to Ashland's design were mostly preserved and incorporated, the McDowells were the ultimate definers of Ashland's appearance.

For more on Ashland, go to <http://historyofahousemuseum.com/about-this-blog/>

Wendy Bright is the former director of operations at Ashland, and is working on a book on the estate, to be published by the University Press of Kentucky.

[slideshow id=508]

Category

1. People
2. Places

Tags

1. Ashland
2. featured

Date Created

November 2, 2011

Author

mike

default watermark