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Good Shepherd Foundation To Renovate New Lexington Voting House

By Brian Hamilton

The New Lexington Voting House was relocated from Highway 43 to Shepherd Hill in Samantha, Alabama on October 6, 2016. The voting house's original location was on Highway 43 North across from Big Al's Restaurant in New Lexington, Alabama. The family purchased the old voting house with the intentions on renovating it into the Pearl-Frances Chapel, named for The Williamson siblings' grandmothers, Pearl Williamson and Frances Keaton.

The chapel will be complete with a steeple and cross and will be used as both a wedding venue for intimate, country weddings, vow renewals, baby dedications, as well as other special occasions. The Williamsons also said that the Pearl-Frances Chapel would provide a place for the community to stop in for special prayer needs or to have a moment with the Lord.

"We won't have church here, but it'll just be a little chapel on our property," said Becky Williamson Martin. "We like preserving things; we like history of where we grew up, and that's part of the motivating factor (for moving the building)." Martin said that her brother Larry Williamson also had a vision for a chapel on the property. "If you saw what it looked like, vines were overtaking it, and if it had not been moved, it would have just been destroyed," said Martin. Ricky Williamson said the family had visited some chapels in the Ft. Payne area of northeast Alabama, which gave them the idea for what do in restoring the building.

The family said that their goal is to maintain as much of the original charm as possible and preserve the integrity and history of the voting house. "We're working to find out the history and we're wanting to do a plaque," said Martin. The

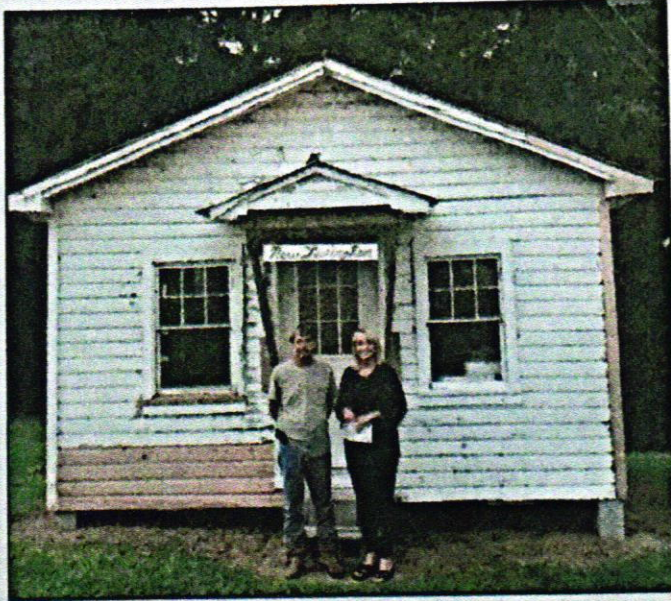


PHOTO BY BRIAN HAMILTON

Ricky Williamson and sister Becky Williamson Martin with New Lexington Voting House, which is soon to be renovated into a chapel

only history that the family really knows about the building is that it was used as a place to vote. "It's been down for years, but I know I voted in there, probably 10 or 15 years ago," said Ricky Williamson. "That was its purpose. It was meant to be a voting house," said Martin.

They are asking the general public to contact the foundation if anyone has pictures or any details regarding the history of the building. They can contact the foundation at P.O. Box 83, Samantha, Alabama; by e-mail at info@goodshepherdfoundation.org; or by phone at 205-233-3794. It may also be possible to find information on the building by contacting Hayes Boyd at the West Alabama Heritage Learning Center in Northport. The center is open on Thursdays from 10am-4pm.

The family bought the voting house from its original owners, John and Peggy Walker, and plan to have the chapel restored in time for a 50th Anniversary vow renewal next July. "It hadn't been used for years," said Martin. "My brother saw it as a chapel, so he worked it out and we got it moved." The Williamsons are planning a community dedication ceremony in the near future.