

A SPRING EVENING AT THE POPE HOUSE

My friend, Chris Keeney and I, had an enchanting evening at the Pope House last Thursday night. No, it was not the home of the Vicar of the Catholic Church! This Pope House is the antebellum home of Dr. Mike and Virginia Caruso. What a special occasion! I felt like Scarlett O'Hara-Drzewiecki during my first visit to a classic Southern antebellum home.

The Pope House was built circa 1820 by Samuel Hazard. Due to business problems, Mr. Hazard sold the home to Benjamin Pope in 1828. Mr. Pope was one of the first mayors of Huntsville, Alabama, and he lived in this home until 1851.



THE BEAUTIFUL POPE-CARUSO HOUSE...DONE IN FEDERALIST ARCHITECTURE STYLE

Dr. Mike and Virginia Caruso purchased the home in 1992. The official name is now the "POPE-CARUSO HOUSE", but is still often referred to as "The Pope House." Upon purchasing the home, the Caruso family began a labor of love and restored the home to its original configuration. I love the fact that they worked hard to preserve the original landscaping with old boxwood, dogwood, and other old trees.

The reason Chris and I visited the Caruso home last Thursday night was for a fundraiser for the BURRITT ON THE MOUNTAIN museum. A champagne brunch and concert were also a part of the evening's festivities.



PHIL WEAVER AND KEN WATTERS ENTERTAIN GUESTS AT THE POPE-CARUSO HOME. GARDEN NOOKS CREATE A WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE!

The Pope Caruso Home is located in the Twickenham District of Huntsville. The Twickenham District was designated by the National Register of Historic Places as a historic site on January 4, 1973. Chris Keeney, who accompanied me last Thursday night, has lived in Huntsville since 1966. She can remember when the antebellum homes in the district were all in a shambles. She is grateful that new owners of these antebellum homes have restored them to their beautiful original dignity.

Chris also was my teacher last Thursday evening. As we were touring the home, Chris pointed at what I thought was a book case, and exclaimed, "Oh look at that beautiful Sugar Chest!" Revealing my Northern Naiveté, I replied, "Sugar Chest? What on earth is a Sugar Chest?" Chris educated me that in the late 1800's when this house was built; sugar was a very expensive commodity. Sugar was kept locked in a Sugar Chest, so the workers could not get at it. The matron of the home wore the key to her Sugar Chest around her neck. If the help needed sugar, the matron had to come and unlock the Sugar Chest for them.



THE SUGAR CHEST

Chris continued to share her knowledge of Southern lore with me. As we were leaving, she pointed out the Carriage Mount in front of the Pope-Caruso Home. "Julie, can you guess what the Carriage Mount was for?" asked Chris. Well, this was pretty easy to figure out. Ladies would step on the Carriage Mount to assist them getting into carriages!



THE CARRIAGE MOUNT IN FRONT OF THE POPE-CARUSO HOME.

In closing, I would like to thank Dr. Mike and Virginia Caruso for their kindness. Mrs. Caruso is a genteel Southern woman, who is an expert at delivering Southern Hospitality to her guests. Many thanks for her permission to display these pictures. Thank you for sharing your home for a fundraiser for my favorite museum in Huntsville...BURRITT ON THE MOUNTAIN. Both Chris and I agree...What a Superb Springtime Southern evening!