



The Gleaves House

An old man had carefully written out the details of his will, but after his death his son had turned the inheritance of others to his own use. The actions of the son allowed him more wealth than he might otherwise have had, but his descendants were eventually deprived of what had been gained by his greed, and the lives of others were diminished in the process. A house was built, and after the years had passed into well over a century, it became one of the last remaining structures of a bygone age. With its classical design, its individuality, and the quality of its craftsmanship and construction, the house stood in increasing contrast to more modern dwellings, and by revealing such unmistakable change, its presence provided insights into the direction of that change. The house had stood long enough to become part of the cultural heritage of the neighborhood and of the region, but, as had happened with an earlier inheritance, it was not to be passed on to its proper recipients.

William Stuart was born in Fife-Shire, Scotland, around the middle of the eighteenth century, and after coming to America, he apparently lived for a number of years in North Carolina. He arrived in the Cumberland wilderness with his family by early 1780, and although he received a land grant of 640 acres in 1785, it was several years before he would be able to do much more than clear a few acres of land. Indian attacks ravaged the Cumberland Settlements until 1795, and it was probably very soon after the end of the fighting that Stuart moved onto his land, which was located along the east bank of Stones River and across from the place which would become known as Clover Bottom. In addition to Stuart, his wife, Margaret, and their son, William, those moving to the Stones River tract included a slave woman named Letitia and nicknamed Lettuce, and her four children. A house was built on the southern part of the land, and the elder William Stuart supervised his farm until his death in late 1807 or early 1808. A few months before his death, Stuart had written a will which not only provided that, after the death of his wife, Lettuce and her children would be emancipated, but also instructed that they would receive all of his livestock, his farming implements, his household utensils and most of his land.

Lettuce and her children should have received their inheritance the following summer with the death of Margaret Stuart, but the younger William Stuart would not abide by his father's will and kept the family in slavery. The children, who may have been fathered by the elder Stuart, remained together for a time, but Lettuce and her two

daughters, Nell and Celia, were eventually sold and taken away. Her two sons, David and Moses, were kept by Stuart as slaves until 1842, and after moving to Williamson County, they were ultimately freed by a court decision. Before his death in the late 1840s, William Stewart, who had changed the spelling of his name, had given much of the northern part of his father's grant to his daughter and her husband, but David and Moses, with the help of William Gleaves, a former neighbor, pursued their inheritance in court. Almost a half century had passed since the death of old William Stuart when the Chancery Court of Davidson County ruled that the two former slaves were entitled to almost 500 acres of the Stuart tract, but by the time of the decree, both their mother and their sister, Nell, were dead, and their sister, Celia, who had been taken to Alabama years earlier, had never been heard from again. In addition to its ruling on the land, the court also ordered that David and Moses should be paid over \$12,000 for the rent of their property from the time of the elder Stuart's death, and it decreed that they were to receive over \$8000 for the work they had performed during that period. David and Moses, who had moved to Missouri, chose not to live on the land which they had finally received, and in 1854 a large part of it was sold to a brother of William Gleaves.

Thomas Gleaves was born in Virginia in 1771, grew up during the Revolutionary War, and had come from Wythe County, Virginia, to Davidson County by 1796, when he bought a tract of land on the east side of Stones River near the land of William Stuart. He married Sally Smith the following year, and their first child, William, who would

grow up to help two disenfranchised slaves reclaim their inheritance, was born soon afterward. Thomas and Sally Gleaves would have a number of other children, and in addition to William, both John, who was born around 1801, and Felix, born around 1816, would have connections to the Stuart tract. Felix Gleaves was still growing up on his father's farm when his older brother John married in 1828, and by the time Felix married eight years later, John had several children. Sally Gleaves died in the 1840s, not long before the death of her husband Thomas, and in 1854, her son, Felix Gleaves, who had taken care of his father in his last years and had been rewarded with a large share of his estate, bought 128 acres of the Stuart tract from the former Stuart slaves, David and Moses. Felix Gleaves probably built the stylish two-story house soon after buying the land and apparently lived there with his wife until the autumn of 1860, when the property was sold to his nephews, Richard and John Bell Gleaves, sons of his older brother John, who had died in the early 1850s.

At the beginning of the Civil War the household apparently included Richard and John Bell Gleaves, their widowed mother, and a younger sister and brother, and although the farm was small, there

were some twenty slaves living on the place. Although the house was not damaged during the war, the Gleaves farm suffered significant losses to foragers, and of those who had been living in the house in 1860, only John Bell Gleaves was still living there by the end of the decade. In 1866, the year before the death of his brother, Richard, John Bell Gleaves had married Annie Ridley, a descendant of early Davidson County settler George Ridley, and by 1870 two daughters had been born in the house. Four additional children were born over the next few years, but Annie Ridley Gleaves died in 1876, and her husband's unmarried cousin, Charity Gleaves, came to help him raise the children. Most of the Gleaves children grew up and left home during the latter years of the century, but two daughters, Carrie and Blanche, remained in the house after the death of John Bell Gleaves in 1909. The house stayed in the family for a number of years, and in 1967, after several changes in ownership, the Gleaves house became the property of Jerry D. Nelson. The house remained in Nelson's possession for nearly twenty years, but in the spring of 1986 Nelson sold it to the Chapel Road-SASA Apartment Company, a business concern located in Texas, and the *Gleaves House* was razed soon afterward.

The Gleaves House

Researched by Paul Clements

William Stuart-birthplace	Aiken, <i>Donelson</i> . 225.	Sally Gleaves-death in 1840s	U.S. Census, 1840 <i>Tennessee Population Schedule</i> (p. 312) and 1850 (omitted).
William Stuart-residence in North Carolina	North Carolina, <i>State Records</i> . 22:283.	Thomas Gleaves-death, cared for by Felix	Davidson County Will Book 14:490.
William Stuart-arrival on Cumberland	Aiken, <i>Donelson</i> . 225.	Felix (R.) Gleaves-purchase of land	RODC 19:284.
	North Carolina, <i>State Records</i> . 19:572.	Felix (R.) Gleaves-probable builder of house	RODC 19:284 (price of \$20 per acre) vs 31:427 (price of \$40 per acre).
William Stuart-land grant	RODC A:157.	Felix (R.) Gleaves-sale of property	RODC 31:427.
Clover Bottom-naming of	<i>Tennessee Gazette</i> . 27 March 1805, p. 4.	John (G.) Gleaves-death	Davidson County Will Book 16:483.
William Stuart-name of wife	Davidson County Will Book 4:13.	John (G.) Gleaves-father of Richard and John Bell	U.S. Census, 1850 <i>Tennessee Population Schedule</i> . <i>Davidson County</i> .
William Stuart son, son's family, slaves	<i>Ibid.</i> , Book 3:191.	Gleaves household at beginning of war	<i>Ibid.</i> , 1860 (household headed by Elizabeth W. Gleaves).
Letitia-proper name of Lettuce	Davidson County Chancery Court Minute Book A:205.	Gleaves place-slaves	<i>Ibid.</i> , 1860 <i>Slave Schedule</i> .
William Stuart-location house, death, will	Davidson County Will Book 3:191.	Gleaves place-losses to foragers	United States, <i>Senate Report of the Quartermaster General</i> , 1867, file #822.
Margaret Stuart-death	<i>Ibid.</i> , Book 4:13.	John Bell Gleaves-in house 1860-1870	U.S. Census, 1860 <i>Tennessee Population Schedule</i> . <i>Davidson County</i> (Elizabeth W. Gleaves) vs 1870 (John B. Gleaves).
William Stuart, Jr.-actions on will, fate of slaves, liability of estate	Davidson County Chancery Court Minute Books A:205, B:510, and C:133.	John Bell Gleaves-death of brother, Richard	Davidson County Will Book 21:75.
William Stuart, Jr.-death of	Davidson County Will Book 13:147.	John Bell Gleaves-marriage	Davidson County Marriage Book, vol. 5, p. 230, Microfilm Division, TSLA.
William Stuart, Jr.-gift to daughter	RODC 1:96.	John Bell Gleaves-birth of additional children	U.S. Census, 1880 <i>Tennessee Population Schedule</i> . <i>Davidson County</i> .
William (B.) Gleaves-aid to slaves	Davidson County Chancery Court Minute Book A:338.	Annie Ridley Gleaves-death	Fulcher, 1:75.
Thomas Gleaves-birthdate, birthplace	Catherine Pilcher Avery Papers, box 14, folder 9, Manuscript Division, TSLA.	John Bell Gleaves-cousin's arrival to raise children, death	Davidson County Will Book 37:61 (Will of John B. Gleaves).
Thomas Gleaves-move from Wythe County, land purchase	RODC D:21.	Gleaves House-staying in family	Davidson County Will Book 39:167 (will of Carrie J. Gleaves).
Thomas Gleaves-marriage	Whitley, <i>Davidson County</i> . 4.	Gleaves House-bought by Jerry D. Nelson	RODC 4136:814.
William (B.) Gleaves-birth	U.S. Census, 1850 <i>Tennessee Population Schedule</i> . <i>Williamson County</i> (William B. Gleaves).	Gleaves House-sold by Nelson	RODC 6826:94.
Thomas Gleaves-father of William, John, and Felix	Davidson County Will Book 14:490.		
John (G.) Gleaves-birth	U.S. Census, 1850 <i>Tennessee Population Schedule</i> (John G. Gleaves).		
Felix R. Gleaves-birth	<i>Ibid.</i> , (Felix R. Gleaves).		
John (G.) Gleaves-marriage	Whitley, <i>Wilson County</i> . 91.		
Felix (R.) Gleaves-marriage	<i>Ibid.</i> , 144.		
John (G.) Gleaves-family at brother's marriage	U.S. Census, 1850 <i>Tennessee Population Schedule</i> . <i>Davidson County</i> .		

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