

*Disclaimer: Please note that this article is an archival document and was originally published in 1987. The information and events discussed reflect the context of that time. This piece is part of our archival collection, showcasing the rich history of the Sampson Arts Council. It provides a glimpse into the events and activities of that period, capturing the essence of our past initiatives and community engagements. As a historical document, it reflects the historical context of its publication and should be viewed as such.*



## Visions & Views

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### ***The Dr. Small House, A Cultural Asset***

*Claude H. Moore*

Today the Dr. Victor R. Small home, standing at 709 College Street, is the center of cultural and historical activities in Clinton and Sampson County. This is a fitting memorial to the late Dr. Victor R. Small (1888-1971). Dr. Small was the son of Mr. Mrs. John Small. He attended the public schools in Kentucky and did his undergraduate work at Miami University in Ohio. He attended the Medical School of Ohio State University and was licensed to practice in 1916. In World War I he served in the U.S. Armed Services overseas. He became interested in mental health, first practicing in Ohio, and later at the Dix Mental Hospital in Raleigh. It was here that he wrote the book, *I knew 3,000 Lunatics*. He often joked about hypochondriacs and recommended that they take plenty of exercise, drink a lot of water and develop a hobby.

In 1920, Dr. Small was married to Suzanne Jacobs of Iowa, and they had one daughter, Patricia, who married but had no children.

Dr. Small came to Clinton in 1924 and remained here until his death. He was a beloved Physician who made house calls and had much compassion for the poor. His principal purpose in the practice of medicine was not for material gain but to be of service to mankind.

In 1924, Dr. Small purchased the old house and lot on College Street from Mrs. Bettie S. Matthews, the widow of the late Leamon L. Matthews. Mr. Matthews had been the Superintendent of the Sampson Count Schools. He had purchased the house in 1908 from Judge Henry A. Grady. The lot had been purchased in 1869 by Abram Hobbs from the Reverend J.L. Stewart who had come to Clinton during the War Between the States from Mississippi. We believe that the Small House was built about 1870 by Abram Hobbs, but it was remodeled beyond recognition in 1908 and again in 1925 by Dr. Small.

Dr. Small was a creative person, well read with a great love for the arts. He wrote four books of poetry, *The Feel of Earth*, *Over My Shoulder*, *Down Coharie River Way*, and *Old Footprints in the Clay*. He was very concerned about the decline of interest in the fine arts and decided to do something concrete about it. In section seven of his Will he left the College Street house to Sampson County to be used "...as archives-repository for collected, and to be collected articles, papers, and other memorabilia; and also for the use of certain persons or groups of persons, who from time to time wish to use the buildings for the purpose of promoting and furthering an interest in music, literature, and the fine arts in general. The selection of the groups will be left to the discretion of that certain Permanent Organizational and Operational Board hereinafter named."

The Small House is in the good Greek revival style with four square columns with a two-story portico. There are four large rooms downstairs and four upstairs with halls on both floors. The exterior is weatherboarded with heart timbers and the floors are also of heart pine. A fine paneled staircase is located at the rear end of the hall. The doctor's office is located in a small building adjacent to the west end of the house.

The Sampson County Historical Society is using one of the rooms upstairs as an office and a repository for historical data.

The doctor's office (apartment) of the property is currently serving as a residence for the Visiting Artist. This provides an excellent opportunity for the visiting artist to become involved with all aspects of arts promotions.

The house is located on a large spacious lot with beautiful pecan trees, wisteria vines, and remnants of earlier gardens. Plans are underway to landscape appropriate gardens which will also accommodate parking on the grounds.

The small playhouse behind the house has similar columns and is in some aspects a replica of the large house.

Through combined efforts of local groups and the Sampson Historical Society, the property is on the National Registry of House and Buildings.

## **Organizational and Operational Board of the Victor R. Small Cultural Arts Center**

The Permanent Organizational and Operational Board of the Small House has been meeting regularly and is quite proud of the improvements and progress made with the House. Sampson County is indeed fortunate to have this beautiful home for a center for the arts.

The public is encouraged to visit this facility and to offer suggestions and ideas for the improvement and use of the property. Landscaping plans and Victorian garden ideas are being studied. An anonymous donor has given a modified Duncan Fife Sofa and a large mirror to the house. Mr. Elbert Dudley, formerly on the Board, has donated a beautiful floor covering for the kitchen area and two large, Victorian style parlor chairs. The county has painted inside and refinished the floors. It is truly beautiful. With the presence of the Sampson County Historical Society and the Sampson County Arts Council headquartered within its walls, pleasant echoes will be heard.

It is possible that an Open House will be held during the Holiday Season this year. This will be announced at a later date.

The House is available for special use by making your reservation through the Sampson Community College. All events scheduled at the house must be open to the general public and no charges can be made. Further information can be obtained by calling the Continuing Education Center for Sampson Community College at 592-7176.

Currently serving on the Permanent Board are: Doris Gore, Girlie Underwood, Harold Cook, C. Marion Butler and Norma Moore.



*The Sampson Arts Council is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to enriching the cultural lives of Sampson County residents. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law and support our mission of nurturing and promoting the arts.*