

## ALISON'S HOUSE

After completing Sarah's House, Aaron Friedman was ready to build his fourth miniature house for granddaughter Alison. "I looked through a lot of magazines and I looked at a lot of pictures," said Friedman. "I finally decided upon an English Tudor type house" that he found in a catalog of house plans offered for sale.

He used the picture of the front elevation of that house to create the exterior elevation of Alison's House, which features brick siding around the first floor level made from oven fired miniature bricks and mortared joints. The brick chimney has an angled expansion at its base opposite the fireplace inside.



**"Alison's House"**

Protruding bricks offer visual relief on the upper portion of the chimney, and the flues jut above the chimney top.



**Aaron Friedman points out details of "Alison's House."** Photo courtesy of Alabama Department of Archives and History. Donated by Alabama Media Group. Photo by Victor Calhoun, *Mobile Press-Register*.

The exterior of the second floor is finished in stucco, with heavy exposed oak beams stained dark brown reflecting the Tudor style. According to *Mobile Press-Register* reporter Betty Jo Lagman, Friedman made the stucco from patching plaster, which he applied with a small brush in a swirl design and then painted. He glued on more than 4,000 tiny cedar roof shingles one by one to top off the house. The roof includes copper rain valleys. "I don't want it to leak," Friedman joked.<sup>1</sup> He also hand made the wooden attic ventilation louvers at the top of the roof gables.

As reported by the *Press-Register*, Friedman also hand made the windows with diamond striping to create a "set in" appearance.<sup>2</sup> "I couldn't find any diamond shaped windows that they sell for dollhouses because of the size [I needed], so I had to hand make all of the windows in the house," he remarked.

A welcome mat greets visitors at the front door. The house is surrounded by landscaped flower beds, with dark wooden lawn furniture and a bird fountain on the front lawn. Friedman told Lagman of the *Press-Register* that the slate flagstone front porch and walkway were "put in

one stone at a time.”<sup>3</sup> The walkway leads around to a flagstone porch on one side with white wrought iron furniture and hanging plants. A French door on the second floor opens out to a balcony that overhangs the front entrance.

Upon entering the house, visitors first arrive in an oak paneled entry hall. The entry is furnished with an umbrella stand, a long, narrow Oriental rug, and a roll top desk and swivel desk chair.



**Entry Hall**

From the entry, sliding pocket doors that really work lead into the great room. The floor in this room is made of strips of hardwood that Friedman glued down individually, sanded, stained dark, and varnished. The ceiling features Tudor-style exposed oak beams that are stained dark, with a bright chandelier shedding light and setting the mood. Friedman added a hearth to a fireplace made by Braxton Payne, a well-known creator of miniature fireplaces, mantels, and other accessories. An upholstered sofa and wing chairs are arranged on a fringed blue area rug in front of the fireplace, where the coals are still glowing after the fire has gone out. The upholstery, rug, and curtains are all color coordinated.



**Great Room**

A focal point of the great room is the elaborate custom bar that Friedman designed and built from strips of walnut. The fully stocked bar includes a brass foot rail and shelves for its many glasses and bottles. A grand piano stands at the opposite side of the great room.

Next to the great room is a library with a game table and four chairs. It looks like a card game is in process—playing cards lie face up on the table, and open cans of beer are set in the built-in coasters at each corner of the table. The window in one wall is surrounded by a stately wooden floor-to-ceiling built in bookcase that is loaded with leather-bound volumes. A newspaper has been left on the dark green leather wing chair, which is a “signed piece” by miniatures artist A. L. Summerlot.



**Wet Bar**



**Library**

In the kitchen, Friedman chose light maple for the cabinets and furniture to provide relief from the dark oak floors, paneling, and furniture that appear in the other rooms of the house. The kitchen floor is made of bright yellow, orange, and white vinyl tile, and pale yellow wallpaper with darker stripes adds to the airy atmosphere. A wood butcher's block island stands in the



**Kitchen**

center of the room, with copper pots and pans as well as a whole salami hanging above. The blades on the ceiling fan in the center of the room actually turn. Florescent tube lights placed over the sink and stove provide lighting for the chef of the house and helpers. Wicker baskets and a set of turquoise-colored ceramic bowls are lined above the wall cabinets. Sarah Friedman cross-stitched the "There Is No Place Like Home" sampler hanging on one wall.

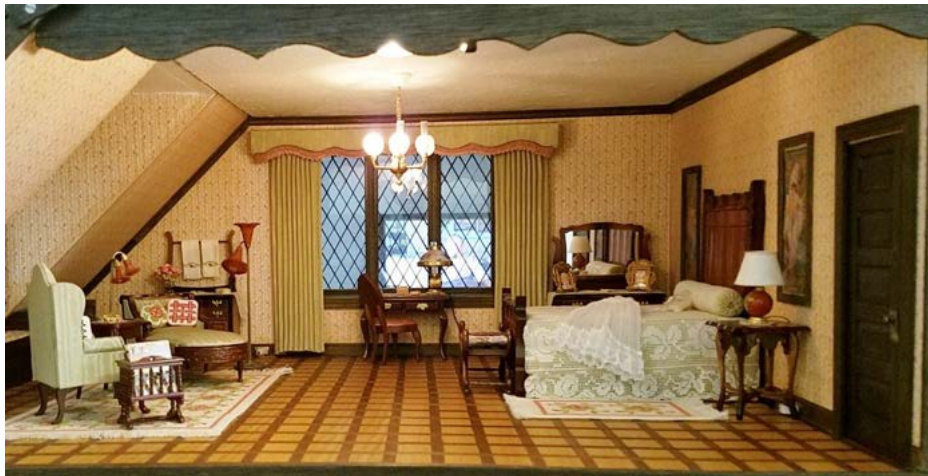


**Dining Room**

A door leads from the kitchen to the adjacent dining room. "One of the most difficult things about building a doll house," said Friedman, "is showing a room behind a room. In this case, we have the kitchen with the dining room behind it. In order to achieve this, I found it necessary to put a hinge in the [exterior] wall so that I could open up this part of the house and

show the dining room.” The dining room is furnished with heavy oak furniture in keeping with the oak beams and paneling prevalent throughout the house. A crystal chandelier over the dining table lights the room, and matching crystal candelabras are set on a side table against one wall. An elegant silver service is displayed on open oak shelving against another wall. The plush carpet, wallpaper, and draperies are color coordinated in pink.

A handmade wooden staircase leads from the entry hall up to the second floor. Here, the large master bedroom is distinguished by a wood veneer parquet floor that Friedman installed



**Above and below: Master Bedroom**



one tiny piece at a time. The master bed features a headboard and footboard in an unusual serpentine pattern. Long-time family friend Pearl Brook made the lace bed covering and the delicate white nightgown that are arranged atop the bed. Friedman cut pictures of reproductions of famous paintings out

of a magazine, put them in hand made frames, and hung them on either side of the bed. Framed photos of Alison and her brother, Nick, are prominently placed on the dresser.

A writing table, chair, and lamp are positioned by one window in the master bedroom. A sitting area opposite the bed is set off with a needlepoint rug made by Sarah Friedman, which is a larger version of the rug next to the bed. The rugs, upholstery, and drapes are all color coordinated. The sitting area includes a window seat and storage area that Friedman custom built to fit under the angled ceiling at this end of the room. A chandelier and two unusual tulip torch lamps that the Friedmans purchased on a trip to Hawaii light this end of the room.

The master bathroom has pink floor tile, pink wallpaper, and pink porcelain fixtures with floral paintings. The frilly

towels, vanity table, and accessories continue the pink and white pattern. A box of tissues, hand mirror, and hairbrush are carefully arranged on the vanity table. A framed collection of tiny sea shells hangs on a wall. An octagonal diamond glass window in the rear wall brings additional light into the room.

A second bedroom is on the other side of the upstairs hallway. This room has a blue carpet that matches the color of the wallpaper. The bedroom furniture features wicker panels on the headboard, rocking chair, and the doors and drawer fronts of the dresser, armoire, and nightstands. A white lace coverlet adds texture to the white bedspread. An elegant black nightgown made by Pearl Brook has been carefully placed across the bed. It looks as if someone is about to have a birthday because a number of wrapped presents have been set on the bookcase and atop the armoire, waiting to be opened.



**Second Bedroom**

Behind the second bedroom is the children's bedroom and nursery, which includes a crib with a canopy edged in frilly lace. The lace theme is continued on the borders of the window curtains. There is also a youth bed and a toy chest under the window. Children are playing with their toys on the floor. Sarah Friedman cross-stitched the pictures hanging on the wall. This room is above the dining room and is seen when the exterior wall is swung open, as described above.



**Children's Bedroom/Nursery**

Sarah Friedman needlepointed the seat cushions for the dining room chairs and several benches seen throughout the house, as well as throw pillows and rugs in many of the rooms. Sarah also made the fluffy bathroom towels and cross-stitched several pieces that hang on the walls. Pearl Brook made all of the draperies and curtains seen on the windows throughout the house. Pearl also made the tiny individual flowers that are arranged in the dining room centerpiece, in vases throughout the house, and “planted” in the flowerbeds surrounding the house outside.

It took Friedman about 11 months to build Alison's House, which he completed in 1984.

*Information compiled by Jere Friedman. All photos by Jere Friedman unless otherwise noted.  
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*[Continued on next page.]*

## Sources:

- Video of Aaron Friedman describing Alison's House
- Lagman, Betty Jo. "A wonderland for Alison." *The Mobile Press Register* 14 Oct, 1984: F-13. Print.
- Fields, Mary Durland. "Southern House Tour." *Nutshell News* Dec. 1992: 36-41. Print.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Lagman, Betty Jo. "A wonderland for Alison." *The Mobile Press Register* 14 Oct, 1984: F-13. Print.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

## Additional photos of Alison's House:



**Above: Rear View of Alison's House. Right: Side View of Alison's House with exterior wall opened to show Dining Room and Children's Room/Nursery**



**Below: Exterior Details of Alison's House**



**Below: Detail of Dining Room**





**Above and below: Front Entry, Hallway and Staircase**



**Above: Second Floor Landing**



**Above: Detail of Library, including leather chair signed by miniatures artist A. L. Summerlot**





**This page: Details of Great Room**





**Above and right: Details of Kitchen**



**Above and below: Details of Master Bedroom**





**This page: Master Bathroom**





**This page: Details of Second Bedroom**

