

JESSICA AND KAITLIN'S HOUSE



“Jessica and Kaitlin’s House”

Jessica and Kaitlin Friedman are twins, so Aaron Friedman built one house that he named for both of his twin granddaughters. The exterior of Jessica and Kaitlin’s House is a replica of the historic “McGowin-Creary house” on Government Street in Mobile, Alabama, which was built in 1904.

When Friedman decided to use the McGowin house as the architectural model for his next home, he contacted the owners.

They allowed Aaron and his wife, Sarah, to tour the house and take extensive photographs of the exterior and interior architectural features and items of interest. Friedman then used those photos to create a 1/8 inch model that enabled him to work out exterior design elements and proportions and to determine how he wanted to arrange the interior rooms.

In constructing the miniature house, Friedman painstakingly re-created the exterior features and certain aspects of the interior of the actual house. For example, Betty Jo Lagman of the *Mobile Press-Register* reported that Friedman matched the moldings used throughout the actual house as closely as possible. “I waited almost three months for one special molding that follows around the house under the roof soffit,” he said.¹

Mirroring the actual house, the exterior of Jessica and Kaitlin’s House is clad in “stone.” To replicate the look of the real house, Friedman hand cast approximately 1,700 stones by mixing plaster of Paris with sand and placing the mixture in handmade wooden frames that he made to the exact size and shape needed for each finished stone. While most of the stones are rectangular, many had to be made slightly convex to conform to design elements of the exterior, including the semi-circular front steps and rounded bay on one side of the house. Once the plaster and sand mixture dried, Friedman meticulously hand sanded each piece to ensure a uniform thickness and finish. As Friedman told the *Press-Register’s* Lagman, “The hardest part of (building) the house was making the stones.”²



Aaron Friedman holds a photograph of the “McGowin-Creary house,” which served as the inspiration for “Jessica and Kaitlin’s House.” *Photo courtesy of Alabama Department of Archives and History. Donated by Alabama Media Group. Photo by Roy C. McAuley Mobile Press-Register.*

Friedman used a variety of materials and processes to re-create the striking entrance of the real house. In addition to the specially made moldings installed below the soffit (as mentioned above), he reproduced the stately columns on the front porch and upstairs balcony by using fluted wooden curtain rods that he cut to length and painted white or stained to match the woodwork surrounding the front doors. He also made special forms for the cast concrete benches located on either side of the front porch and cast them just as he did all of the stones on the house's exterior walls.³ To duplicate the polished black and white marble flooring of the original front porch, Friedman hand cut vinyl floor tiles into one-inch squares and fitted and glued them in one at a time.



Front doors with leaded glass, stained glass sidelights, and fluted columns



Serpentine planter beds around the base of the front porch are landscaped with blooming flowers and evergreen bushes. The roof is covered with black asphalt roofing shingles that stand in stark contrast to the bright white stone facades. The finishing exterior touch is an exact reproduction of the Mobile Historic Development Commission plaque mounted next to the front door, just as it is on the actual house.

As described in the *Press-Register* article, Friedman replicated as many interior elements of the original house as he could, including the



artwork in the stained glass sidelights beside the double front doors. He built the elegant miniature stairway leading upstairs from the front entry, which closely resembles the staircase in the actual house with its detailed wainscoting.⁴

But Friedman also pointed out to the *Press-Register* a number of details that vary from the original home. "There's no way I could duplicate the interior," he emphasized. "There are 14 fireplaces in the real house. And a back wall on the second floor landing features beautiful Tiffany stained glass. So, I did my own thing inside. I added leaded glass to my front doors," he said, and noted that he included stained glass in the door and

windows at the upstairs landing in the front of the house in lieu of the windows in the back wall of the actual house.⁵

Freed from the constraints that he'd otherwise encounter if he tried to reproduce the interior rooms of the original house, Friedman used his own imagination to create a layout that viewers can enjoy with ease. He designed the downstairs level of the house to show the formal living room with a music area on one side of the front entry. The dining room and kitchen balance the layout on the opposite side of the lower level. The entry area, living room, and dining room have hardwood flooring that Friedman installed one strip at a time and then sanded, stained dark, and finished with a sealer.



Front entry

A visitor would enter the house through the double front doors with leaded panels and stained glass windows on either side. The entrance hallway features a round mahogany Queen Anne table centered on a petit point rug made by Sarah Friedman. A vase full of fresh-cut flowers made by Pearl Brook rests on top of this table. A high-backed sofa is positioned against a wall opposite the staircase. The sofa's cream-colored upholstery blends perfectly with the wallpaper behind it. Large cloisonné vases are set on end tables on either side of the sofa, and an even larger vase is set on the floor beside the front doors.



Above: Living Room; Below: Music Nook



The living room is furnished with a sofa and chairs covered in pink upholstery. The tall windows in this room are hung with graceful lace drapes. A silver tea service has been placed on the coffee table in front of the fireplace, where a framed photograph of Jessica and Kaitlin hangs over the marble mantle. Porcelain sculptures are on display in a curio cabinet beside a wing chair and ottoman upholstered with gold brocade fabric. A grand piano with sheet music is ready to be played in the music nook on one side of the room.

On the other side of the first floor, a columned doorway leads from the entrance foyer into the dining room, which is furnished with black and gold dining table, chairs, buffet, and china cabinet. The dining table stands above a silk French

tapestry area rug and has been set with an elegant china dinner setting on lace placemats. A graceful crystal chandelier sheds light from above the table, while delicate lace curtains made by family friend Pearl Brook let light into the room from outside.



Dining Room

An arched doorway leads from the dining room into the kitchen, which has a wood parquet floor and white cabinets with butcher block countertops. A wedding cake and champagne on ice wait for guests to arrive for the special occasion. A basket holds fresh apples, a copper tea kettle sits on the stove, and tins for flour, sugar, coffee, and tea are lined up on the counter. Copper jello or compote molds hang above the wall cabinets. Sarah Friedman made the framed needlepoint sampler that says “God Bless Our Home” hanging on one wall. Finally, a carafe of coffee and mugs with “Jessica” and “Kaitlin” printed on them await the residents on a small side table.

Heading up the stairs from the front entry, a guest first arrives at the second floor landing. An arched door inset with pale pink and green stained glass in a floral pattern leads out to the balcony above the front porch. Friedman set stained glass windows with matching floral designs into the wall on either side of the door to bring more light inside. The balcony features a sweeping semi-circular white balustrade, more of the fluted columns seen on the ground level, and grey slate pavers. A set of black wrought iron furniture offers a place to sit and relax.



Upstairs Landing



Friedman laid out the upstairs level of the house so that Jessica and Kaitlin each have their own bedroom and bathroom—one on either side of the upstairs landing. The bedroom on one side is decorated in shades of pink and white, with formal bedroom furniture painted dark green. A matching baby crib is placed near the bed. The furniture stands out against a pale green carpet and sheer pink curtains on the windows. A

picture of Jessica and Kaitlin is placed on the dresser and another photo of the twins with their older sister, Georgie⁶, hangs on the wall in this room.

The pale green carpet and pink and white color scheme extends into the adjoining bathroom, which features pink and white ceramic tiles in a checkerboard pattern. Delicate pink rose floral designs are painted on the white porcelain tub, sink, and toilet. A dressing table and bench, laundry hamper, and wastebasket are all covered in white lace with pink trim, and the windows have white lace curtains. Sarah Friedman made the fluffy pink towels with burgundy trim hanging by the tub and sink and stacked on open shelves in the bathroom.



The other bedroom has deep-pile lavender carpet and a white four poster bed trimmed in white lace. The headboard is painted with a delicate lavender and green floral design. The bolster on the bed, a bedside table, and the dressing table and its bench are all covered in white lace with lavender trim. Pale green striped wallpaper and delicate lavender floral designs painted on the glass globes of the chandelier, as well as at the shades on the floor lamp and table lamp, tie the color scheme together. A breakfast tray with a mug of fresh coffee, a plate of food, and knife and fork offer breakfast in bed. Framed photos of Aaron and Sarah when they were young children hang on the wall.



The deep-pile lavender carpet and pale green striped wallpaper seen in the bedroom are repeated in the adjoining bathroom. The lavender color of the tub, sink, and toilet blend perfectly with the carpet. Off-white marble steps lead up to the sunken tub,

which is situated in a bay window. A wicker bench beside the tub has a lavender-colored satin cushion, a wicker shelf unit holds more fluffy towels made by Sarah Friedman, and there is a wicker wastebasket next to the sink. Delicate white lace curtains hang on the bathroom windows.

Sarah Friedman was heavily involved in selecting the furniture, wall coverings, paint colors, and decorations seen throughout the house. As noted above, she needlepointed several of the rugs seen in the house and made all of the tiny towels in the two bathrooms, as well as many of the curtains. As reported in the *Press-Register*, Pearl Brook made the lace-covered vanity table and matching bedspread seen in one bedroom, as well as flowers for the landscaping surrounding the house.⁷

Jessica and Kaitlin's House was completed in 1989. According to the *Press-Register*, Aaron Friedman estimated that he spent about 1,200 hours on the project, which took eight or nine months to complete.⁸

Information compiled by Jere Friedman. All photos by Jere Friedman unless otherwise noted.
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Sources:

- Lagman, Betty Jo. "Mobile home built in miniature for twins." *The Mobile Register* 5 Nov. 1989: F-6. Print.
- Fields, Mary Durland. "Grandfather's Gallery." *Nutshell News* Jan. 1993: 36-41. Print.

Endnotes:

¹ Lagman, Betty Jo. "Mobile home built in miniature for twins." *The Mobile Register* 5 Nov. 1989: F-6. Print.

² *ibid.*

³ Based on Fields, Mary Durland. "Grandfather's Gallery." *Nutshell News* Jan. 1993: 36-41. Print.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ As a child, Georgie was known as "Jenifer" and that is who "Jenifer's House" is named after.

⁷ Lagman, *op. cit.*

⁸ *ibid.*

Additional Photos of Jessica and Kaitlin's House:



Rear View of Jessica and Kaitlin's House



Living Room and Music Nook



Another view of the Front Entry



Staircase and Upstairs Landing



Second Floor Balcony

This page: Details of bedrooms



Kitchen

