

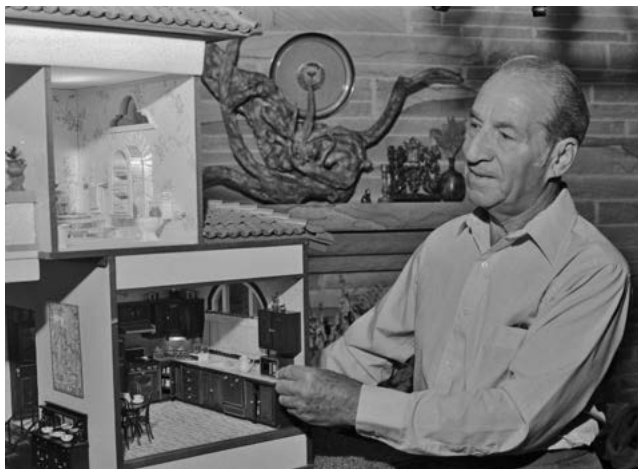
TALITHA'S HOUSE

Aaron Friedman chose a Spanish-style of architecture for his fifth miniature house, which he built for his granddaughter Talitha. Before starting this project, Friedman and his wife, Sarah, traveled to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and other cities to look at Spanish-style homes that he could replicate. Eventually, Talitha's father and the Friedmans' youngest son, Jere, suggested that they look at a house in Opelika, Alabama, where Talitha and her family lived at the time. Indeed, that house appealed to Aaron and he took photographs that he then used to design "Casa Talitha." Betty Jo Lagman the *Mobile Press-Register* quoted Friedman as saying, "It seemed fitting to duplicate the house in Opelika since Talitha lives there."¹



"Talitha's House"

The exterior of Talitha's House is finished in a white stucco made from plaster spackling compound, with arches outlined in faux terra cotta. An arcade stretches from the porte-cochere at one corner past the front door and on to the other end of the house. Bronze lions stand guard on either side of the brick steps that lead up to the front porch, which is furnished with chocolate brown wicker chairs, tables, and a bench. The "grass" yard includes a small fountain, and detailed landscaping surrounds the house.



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

Friedman called attention to the 5,400 oven-fired red clay tiles that make up the roof of Talitha's House. He glued down the tiles one at a time in two overlapping layers, one layer facing up and one facing down, in order to achieve an authentic look. As quoted by the *Press-Register*, Friedman joked "I don't want it to leak." Friedman also noted, "The tiles weigh 62 pounds," so he built the roof section as a separate unit that can be removed for transporting the house.²

Upon entering Talitha's House through the massive paneled front door, a visitor would step onto the floor of the entry landing made of real Italian marble. Friedman painstakingly cut and installed

each tiny tile one by one. A white straw hat and pink polka dot umbrella hang on the heavy wooden coat rack standing against the wall just inside the front door.



Great Room

From the entry, a staircase leads up to the second floor and four steps set at a 45 degree angle lead down to the great room. The staircase and great room feature an abundance of black wrought iron banisters, railings, candle stands, wall accessories, and other furnishings that recreate an authentic Mediterranean look. The “wrought iron” pieces are actually made of solid brass that have been spray painted black. “Soldering the balusters [on the stair railings] was one of the hardest things about the house,” Friedman noted. He said that each time he soldered one joint, the heat from the soldering iron would soften the solder on another joint and the pieces would fall apart.³

As Friedman told the *Press-Register*, “We tried to furnish the doll house in a Spanish décor,” but that proved hard to do. “We decided to go with Spanish modern.”⁴ Friedman used a number of imaginative architectural design elements, such as the split-level treatment and angled steps of the entry and staircase, to break up what otherwise would have been a boring, “straight-on” view of the great room. Friedman also used the wrought iron railings, steps, and area rugs to suggest the boundaries of the music, living, and dining areas within the great room.



Living Area in Great Room

The great room flooring is ½ inch wide walnut strips that Friedman glued in individually, then sanded, stained, and varnished. Heavy dark walnut ceiling beams repeat the theme of the wood floor, stairs, and doors to complete the Mediterranean look of the great room.

The living area is furnished with two upholstered chairs and a sofa facing the fireplace. An elegant silver tea service rests on the coffee table in

front of the fireplace, which is set back into a recessed nook and surrounded by a mantelpiece made of green Italian marble. Etched glass windows on either side of this area bring additional light into the room. Another upholstered easy chair and ottoman are positioned next to a larger set of windows. The upholstery and drapes in the living area are color coordinated in warm shades of tan and brown that blend nicely with the light sand color of the paint on the great room's walls and ceiling.

The dining furniture consists of a stately dining table, chairs with black leather upholstery, and a matching ornate mirrored buffet, all of which are made of dark, heavily carved wood. The table and chairs are stationed on an Oriental rug adjacent to the living area and the buffet stands against a nearby wall. A richly detailed tapestry hangs above the buffet. The dining table and buffet are set with tiny china place settings and serving pieces. A graceful chandelier hangs above the dining table.



Dining Area, with Living Area behind

On the other side of the great room, a grand piano and bench stand atop an Oriental rug to create the music area just below the entry landing. Beyond the music area, an arched doorway leads into the cozy entertainment room. Here, a built-in walnut bookcase holds a television, elaborate stereo system, books, and knick knacks. Friedman made the television by cutting a photograph from a magazine and gluing it to a wooden backing. The look is so realistic that the viewer almost expects to see the picture move and to hear the commentator speak. On one side of the room, a heavily carved table and two chairs are positioned at the arched window. The daily



Entertainment Room

newspaper lies open on the table and a potted fern hangs just above. Against the opposite wall, a magazine rack filled with miniature magazines sits next to a wing chair upholstered in rich, dark brown leather.

At the opposite end of the great room, four steps lead from the dining area up to the kitchen. Friedman said that it took him about a month just to build the walnut kitchen cabinets, which feature tiny brass pulls and handles. The cabinets are fully stocked with

canned and packaged foods, and the inside corner of the lower cabinet houses a lazy susan that actually turns. A cooked turkey is ready to come out of the oven, and copper cookware gleams on the stovetop and above the wall cabinets. Four café chairs encircle the round breakfast table, which is set with a china teapot, teacups, and saucers. The kitchen floor is made of bright yellow and gray vinyl tiles, the walls are papered in bright yellow, and an arched window brings natural light into the room. The broom closet holds cleaning supplies. A microwave oven sits on the kitchen counter and the dishwasher door is open, revealing that it is full of dirty dishes and silverware.



Kitchen Photo by Priscilla Verigan

The upstairs layout consists of two bedrooms with adjoining baths, separated by a hallway. Floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors in each bedroom open onto a balcony and allow the viewer to see into these rooms. The furniture in the master bedroom includes a heavily carved poster bed and rocking chair, as well as a mirrored armoire and dresser. According to the *Press-Register*, Friedman pointed out one hand carved chest and noted that it was an artist’s “signature piece.”⁵ Framed photographs of Talitha and her brother, Jonah, are placed on a wood cabinet. This room features plush pink carpeting, cream toned floral wallpaper, and sheer blue curtains.



Master Bedroom

The plush pink carpeting and floral wallpaper found in the master bedroom also decorate the master bathroom. The sunken tub is surrounded by steps made of mirrored gold tile and pink carpet. A scalloped marble sink stands atop a columned pedestal. The sink and tub have ornate gold fixtures and the toilet has matching gold trim. Shelves beside the sink and bathtub hold bottles and jars of soaps, lotions, and other toiletries, as well as a box of tissues. Sarah Friedman made the fluffy pink towels hanging next to the tub and sink and neatly stacked on shelves above the toilet. She also cut and rolled real pink tissue for the tiny toilet paper holder.



Master Bathroom

In contrast to the master bedroom, the second bedroom reflects a more contemporary

look and feel. It is furnished with a four-poster bed, armoire, and built-in bookcase and entertainment center, all made from dark-stained wood. This room features a rich blue carpet and pale green wallpaper and bedspread.

Unlike the Mediterranean motif found throughout most of the rest of Talitha's House, the bathroom adjacent to the second bedroom received an ultra-contemporary treatment from the Friedmans. A deep white rug sets off the shiny black porcelain fixtures, which are also reflected by mirrored block walls. The shower stall is encased in a brushed aluminum wall covering. A television set has been strategically placed in a corner next to the bathtub to encourage a long, leisurely soak while watching one's favorite show. A shelf above the tub holds a collection of bath salts and lotions. On the opposite wall, Friedman mounted a mirrored pillbox to create the medicine cabinet above the sink.

As he told the *Press-Register's* Lagman, "You have to improvise in miniature work."⁶ Sarah Friedman made the fluffy white towels with black trim seen in this bathroom.

Sarah Friedman was heavily involved in choosing the furniture, wallpapers, and color schemes for all of the rooms in Talitha's House. As with all of the Friedmans' other houses, family friend Pearl Brook hand made the drapes, café curtains, and many other accessories seen throughout the house.

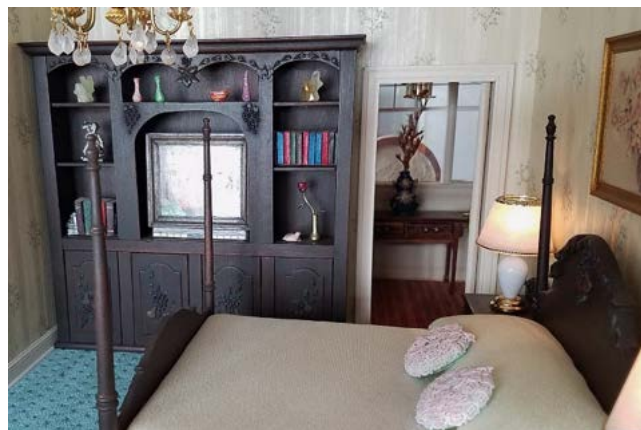
Aaron Friedman completed Talitha's House in 1986. According to the *Press-Register*, he estimated that he spent about 1,000 hours working on this house over the course of one year.⁷

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

- Lagman, Betty Jo. "A casa for Talitha." *The Mobile Press Register* 2 Nov. 1986: F-4. Print.
- Fields, Mary Durland. "Aaron Friedman's Casa Talitha." *Nutshell News* Nov. 1992: 34-38. Print.

[Continued on next page.]



Second Bedroom



Second Bathroom

Endnotes:

¹ Lagman, Betty Jo. "A casa for Talitha." *The Mobile Press Register* 2 Nov. 1986: F-4. Print.

² *ibid.*

³ Based upon and as quoted in Fields, Mary Durland. "Aaron Friedman's Casa Talitha." *Nutshell News* Nov. 1992: 34-38. Print.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

Additional photos of Talitha's House



Above: A partial view of the rear of "Talitha's House"



Front Entry and Music Area of Great Room, with view into Entertainment Room



Detail of Front Entry



Above, below, and right: Exterior details



Above: Detail of Dining Area



Above: Upstairs hallway, between the two bedrooms



Kitchen detail showing broom closet, open refrigerator and freezer, and fully stocked lazy susan



Kitchen detail *Photo by Priscilla Verigan*



An overflowing garbage can sits just outside the kitchen door



Detail of Master Bedroom showing framed photos of Talitha and her brother, Jonah



Above and right: Details of Entertainment Room
Below: Details of Master Bathroom



[Continued on next page.]

This page: Details of Second Bathroom

