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## COLLEGE FOOTBALL 005 Behind the Scenes at Auburn & Alabama



Crimson Tide linebacker Mark Anderson



THIS PAGE: The dining room table is set with owner Sheila Chaffin's mother's fine china, on which homemade breakfasts are served daily. Sheila cooks while her husband Ira chats with guests. Opposite: The house features a cheerful street front thanks to a fresh coat of yellow paint and new landscaping.



The bed and breakfast, a lodging concept previously largely lacking in Birmingham, opened to immediate popularity despite relatively little marketing, and Sheila describes her typical guests as "sophisticated travelers."

While each guestroom takes its design cue from antique or reproduction furnishings, fashion is a recurring theme throughout the house. Period clothes and hats, including a beaded wedding dress, a young girl's batiste tea dress, and an antebellum gown with hoops are casually hung in the bedrooms and lady's parlor as if the home's original occupants had just stepped out for a stroll in 19th-century Birmingham. Framed antique prints of Paris fashions from the 1880s line the upstairs hall.

Sheila treasures a circa 1905 lady's high top shoe resting next to a 1900 foot pedal Singer sewing machine in the second floor sitting room. The shoe was a housewarming gift from a neighbor when the Chaffins hosted a meeting of the Five Points Neighborhood Association.

With the house restored to the crispness of a starched pinafore, Sheila has turned her attention to the front garden tucked behind a picket fence and arbor. Describing the state of the yard as "asphalt" when they bought the home, Sheila has planted a traditional Southern Victorian garden with climbing

#### THE FIVE POINTS NEIGHBORHOOD

"Its original identity as the Town of Highland (1887-1893)...got it off to a solid start. After just six years it not only had hundreds of houses and cottages, a fashionable district, and two stone churches, but also a reputation as perhaps the city's most desirable place to live," wrote Alice Bowsher and Ann Burkhardt in *Town Within a City: The Five Points South Neighborhood 1880-1930*.

"Five Points was one of the city's first recognized historic districts," says preservation consultant Linda Nelson. "The neighborhood has always been a sophisticated community in spirit and in support of historic design standards."

Nelson cites the home restored as Cobb Lane Bed and Breakfast and the McCant House undergoing restoration next door as examples of architecture surviving from the original Town of Highland. She says these houses are preservation "dominoes" joining other nearby adaptive restorations such as the Oasis Women's Counseling Center, the Lathrop House, and Dr. Richard Elkus' orthopedic clinic in an urban residential neighborhood enjoying revitalization.

"There is a wonderful variety of architectural styles in this late-Victorian neighborhood," Nelson continues. "Sidewalks and old trees give it a genuine neighborhood feeling."

As Nelson points out, rehabilitating historic properties can be financially as well as aesthetically rewarding. Federal tax credits of up to 20 percent may apply to restorations meeting government standards.

"Economic studies have shown that property values in historic districts in all cases go up faster than those in surrounding non-historic neighborhoods," Nelson adds. "Sheila and Ira Chaffin are good examples of having the confidence to invest in a historic district."

roses, wisteria, Confederate jasmine, hydrangeas, and camellias. Baskets of flowers add color and scent to the wraparound front porch decorated with white wicker rockers and a child's tea table.

A transplanted New Yorker with a sense of Southern hospitality, Sheila Chaffin has an obvious eye for the romantic. She hopes to attract bridal parties to Cobb Lane, describing the results of her restoration as "a house that looks like a wedding cake." ☺

For reservations or additional information contact  
Cobb Lane Bed and Breakfast at (205) 918-9090  
or visit the Web site at [cobblinebandb.com](http://cobblinebandb.com).





OPPOSITE PAGE. Each of the inn's eight guestrooms has a theme and is furnished with pieces from the Victorian period. Painstaking restoration revealed gorgeous wood trim and floors, as well as marble fireplaces.  
 THIS PAGE, TOP. The sitting room is separated from the dining room with original pocket doors.  
 FAR LEFT: Ira and Sheila Chaffin on the front porch of their labor of love.  
 LEFT: An antebellum gown and antique sewing machine decorate the upstairs sitting room.