Death of a Gracious Past on a Cold and Dreary Day

BY J.E. BOURGOYNE

They're tearing the Old Bonner Home Down

The day was like the house. The day was Thursday, it was cold and dreary. The sky was gray; it was drizzling and there were chilly gusts of wind.

You could stand by the stone gate posts with their vine-covered arch and hear the wind as it rushed through the branches of trees dotting the ground. You could see the tops of smoke stacks belonging to tankers nestled close to the levee running along Patterson Road in Algiers.

Near the base of one of the gate posts, a real estate agent's sign lay on the ground. It didn't matter because the property had already been sold.

The sounds of the river sort of faded away after you walked through the gate and headed down the long path running between two rows of trees leading to the house.

The first you saw of the house were the columns — four of them, still rather white in spite of a fire about a year ago.

As you got closer, you could see the brick walls, the arched windows topped by keystones, the roots of an overturned sweet olive and a truck, parked close to the earthen mound in the middle of the circular driveway.

You could hear the sound of falling lumber and you could see two men perched in the roofless gables of the right wing. They were wearing ski masks to protect themselves from the cold.

They were tearing the old Bonner Home down.

It was an old house, but it wasn't an historic landmark or anything like that. Still, it was a good imitation of grandeur, a fine small-scale replica of a country estate.

Charred interior woodwork still in place Thursday gave hints of a past grandeur; the remains of a loggia suggested an air of graciousness not possessed by the newer, more modest homes of a residential development bordering on three sides of the old Bonner place.

The Bonner Home didn't have much written about it. Information of its past comes in a piecemeal fashion from several sources.

It was used until a few years ago as the John M. Bonner Memorial Home for elderly men. Bonner created the home with a trust fund in 1915.

During later years, the number of elderly residents "dwindled away." Only five remained by the mid 1960s.

In 1965, Bonner heirs filed suit to reclaim the trust on the grounds that it was no longer fulfilling the conditions set forth by the late Mr. Bonner and that trust funds were being exhausted.

The home was abandoned; it caught fire. The property was sold.

And Thursday, they were tearing the Bonner Home down.

REMAINS OF A LOGGIA suggest an air of graciousness possessed by the Bonner Home in Algiers which is being demolished. The property served as a home for elderly men since 1915.