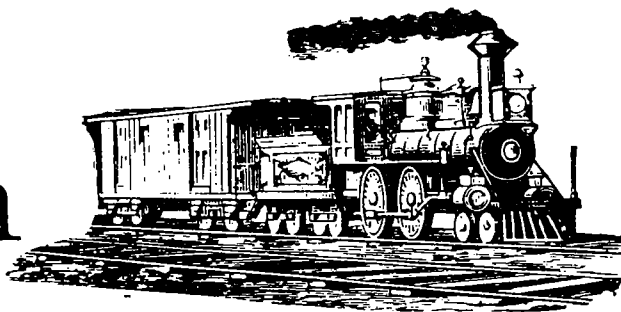


Word From The Junction



(The Manassas Museum News)

January - February, 1993

Volume 11, Number 1

Designing Men: Albert and William Speiden, Architects

by Doug Harvey

Across Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Maryland are many buildings that were designed by architects William and Albert Speiden. Active between 1896 and 1933, the Speidens' work bridged the last years of the Victorian era to the styles of the 1930's. A large volume of their work exists today, both in the built environment around us and in the 3,000 documents and renderings that comprise the Speiden Collection at The Manassas Museum.

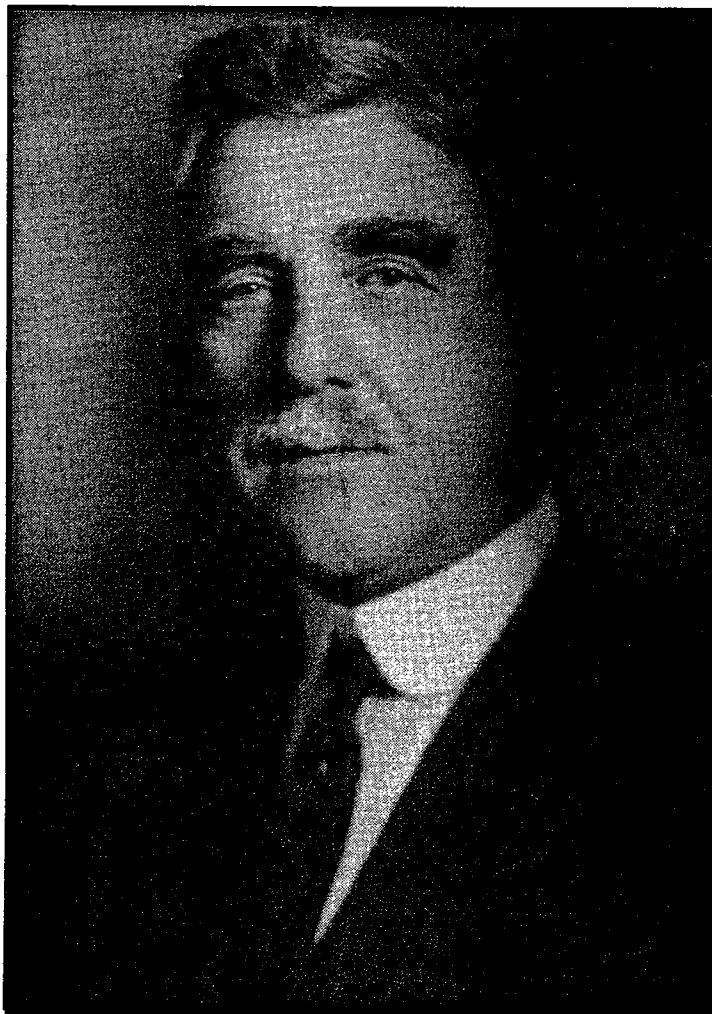
The Speiden family was of Scottish descent, living in Alexandria when William and Albert were born in the 1860's. Albert was educated at Columbian College of George Washington University and completed a law degree. Both brothers also took courses in architecture and drafting. Their interest in design carried them to the U.S. Patent Office where the brothers worked as draftsman during the 1890's. One of the projects they provided drawings for at that time was Samuel Langley's flying machine, a predecessor to the Wright brothers' first successful airplane.

In 1896, William and Albert left the Patent Office to open Speiden and Speiden, Architects on G Street (and later New York Avenue) in the District. Although William died in 1914, the firm was active until Albert's death in 1933. Albert Speiden was an avid member of the AIA (American Institute of Architects) and attended many conferences and annual meetings. Albert moved to Manassas in 1904 following his marriage to Effie Nelson, daughter of the Clerk of the Court for Prince William County. An early commuter, he took the Southern Railroad train into the District each morning with about 30 other Manassas residents.

Speiden and Speiden produced designs for houses, movie theaters, churches, apartment buildings, government buildings, and for renovations to existing structures. Their houses ranged from large Colonial Revivals to small bungalows with a pronounced Craftsman influence. During the early 20th century, the firm designed numerous Colonial Revival homes for developer Frank Lyon. His projects in Arlington (Lyon Park, Lyonhurst, and Lyon Village) retain many of the homes designed by Speiden and Speiden, some of which were in the Spanish Mission style. Rosemont, a development by Suter and Slaymaker in

Alexandria, also holds many examples of Speiden's work in the Craftsman and Colonial Revival vein. Many of these homes had a unique feature—an octagonal arrangement of second floor rooms. Each room upstairs would be accessed from the central octagonal area. Because this layout created corner niches, Speiden turned these into small closets.

Speiden and Speiden produced an array of stylish and functional buildings during their active years. In the late 1890's, the firm designed multi-story apartment buildings



Albert Speiden (Museum Photo).

Word From The Junction is published by The Manassas Museum, with support from the Manassas Museum Associates. Copyright 1993, The Manassas Museum.

THE MANASSAS HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

Mr. Curtis Taylor, <i>Chairman</i>	Mrs. Mae Merchant
Ms. Cynthia Sprunger, <i>Vice Chairman</i>	Mrs. Marion Payne
Mr. Robert Faust	Mrs. Walser Rohr
Mrs. Florence Gustin	Mr. Ronald Stine
Mrs. Ann Walser Harrover	Mr. Donald Wilson
	Col. Ulysses X. White, <i>ex officio</i>

THE MANASSAS MUSEUM ASSOCIATES

Active Board Members

Mrs. Mae S. Merchant, <i>President</i>	Mr. Ronald E. Lane
Mrs. Ann Walser Harrover, <i>Vice-President</i>	Mrs. Mary Beth Lynch
Mrs. Shirley W. Guy, <i>Secretary</i>	Mr. Roland J. Magee
Mr. Kim Light, <i>Treasurer</i>	Mr. Carl Oristian
Ms. Barbara K. Breeden	Mr. Charles Patullo
Mrs. Maxine L. Coleman	Mrs. Judy Ratcliffe
Mr. H.R. Croasdale	Mrs. Walser Rohr
Mrs. Tina Cox	Mr. Lowery B. Saunders
Mr. Franklin P. Dixon	Mrs. Louise Slonim
Mrs. Martha A. France	Mrs. Jeanette Smith
Mrs. Florence Gustin	Ms. Cynthia Sprunger
Mrs. Lisa Harlow	Mr. Ronald Stine
Mrs. Jean K. Harrover	Mr. Curtis Taylor
Mr. Douglas Harvey, <i>ex officio</i>	Ms. Marsha Tinsley
Mrs. Gem Eliz. Johnson	Mr. William H. Washington
Ms. Gloria Bennett-Jones	Col. Ulysses X. White
Dr. Gail Kettlewell	Mr. Robert D. Wittenauer
Ms. Debbie Kuhn	

Honorary Board Members

Mrs. John E. Adams	Mrs. Robert D. Hottle
Mr. and Mrs. Paul J. Arrington	Mrs. J. Benjamin Johnson
Mrs. Rose Ratcliffe Beard	Mr. and Mrs. Peter J. Kane
Mrs. Jessie A. Blakemore	Mr. and Mrs. Connie N. Kincheloe
Mrs. I. J. Breeden	Mrs. Lucie K. Latimer
Mrs. Louise Brown	Ms. Cornelia Lewis
Mrs. W. Hill Brown, Jr.	Mr. and Mrs. G. Keith Lyons
Mayor and Mrs. Robert Browne, Jr.	Mrs. Lou Maroon
Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Buchanan	Ms. Elizabeth Nickens
Mr. and Mrs. G.Y. Carpenter, Jr.	Mrs. Stanley A. Owens
Mr. and Mrs. Lewis J. Carper	Vice Mayor and Mrs. James Payne
Mr. and Mrs. John G. Cartwright	Del. and Mrs. Harry J. Parrish
Mrs. Louise Gallaher Coldwell	R. Adm. and Mrs. Donald T. Poe
Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Cole	Councilman and Mrs. Stephen Randolph
Mr. and Mrs. Edgar R. Conner, Jr.	Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. Ratcliffe
Lt. Gen. and Mrs. Howard Cooksey	Dr. and Mrs. Charles E. Rathke
Mrs. Elvere Conner Cox	Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Rice, Jr.
Mrs. H. Thornton Davies, Jr.	Mrs. John G. Ringler
Mr. and Mrs. James V. Davis, Jr.	Mr. B. Oswald Robinson
Mr. E. L. Derrig	Mrs. W. Sedrick Saunders
Mr. and Mrs. H. Van Duley	Judge and Mrs. Arthur W. Sinclair
Councilman and Mrs. Maury Gerson	Mr. and Mrs. William A. Sprow
Dr. and Mrs. Marvin L. Gillum	Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth B. Swenson
V. Adm. and Mrs. S.L. Gravelly, Jr.	Mrs. Nancy McBryde Unger
Mr. and Mrs. John O. Gregory	Mr. and Mrs. John Weber
Councilman and Mrs. John Grzejka	Mr. and Mrs. Charles Whitaker
Lt. Gen. and Mrs. Joseph Heiser	Councilman and Mrs. Ulysses White
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Heltzel	Mrs. Edith M. Whiteman
Mr. and Mrs. Loy Harris	

Jane Riley, *Associates Coordinator*

Editor

Douglas K. Harvey, *Museum Director*

Assistant Editor

Scott H. Harris, *Museum Curator*

Contributors

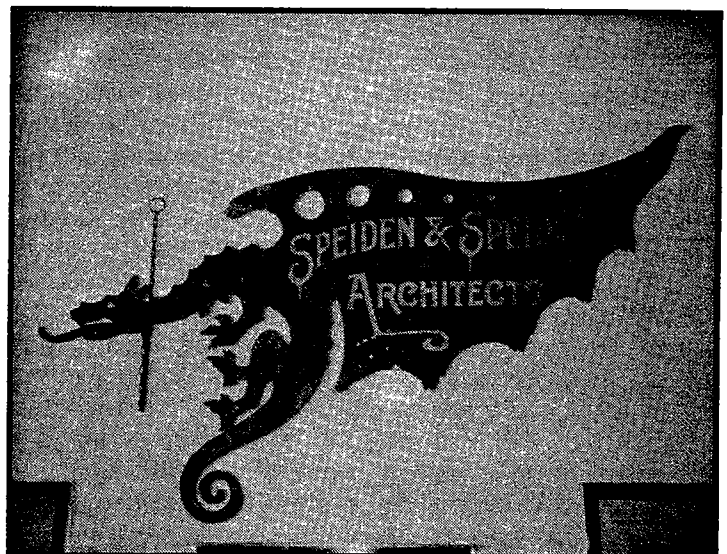
Laura A. Peake, *Museum Specialist*
David L. Purschwitz, *Museum Technician*
Shelley S. Lawson, *Museum Store Manager*

and row houses along M, L, 12th, 14th, 19th, and 20th Streets in the District. In 1907, the firm assisted with the rehabilitation of the Smithsonian Tower, that notable sandstone fixture along the Mall since 1847. Other projects the brothers worked on during their long and diverse career included: the design for the weather observatory atop Mt. Whitney in California, a Georgian Revival home for their brother Thomas in Wilmington, North Carolina, and historic markers for Manassas Battlefield.

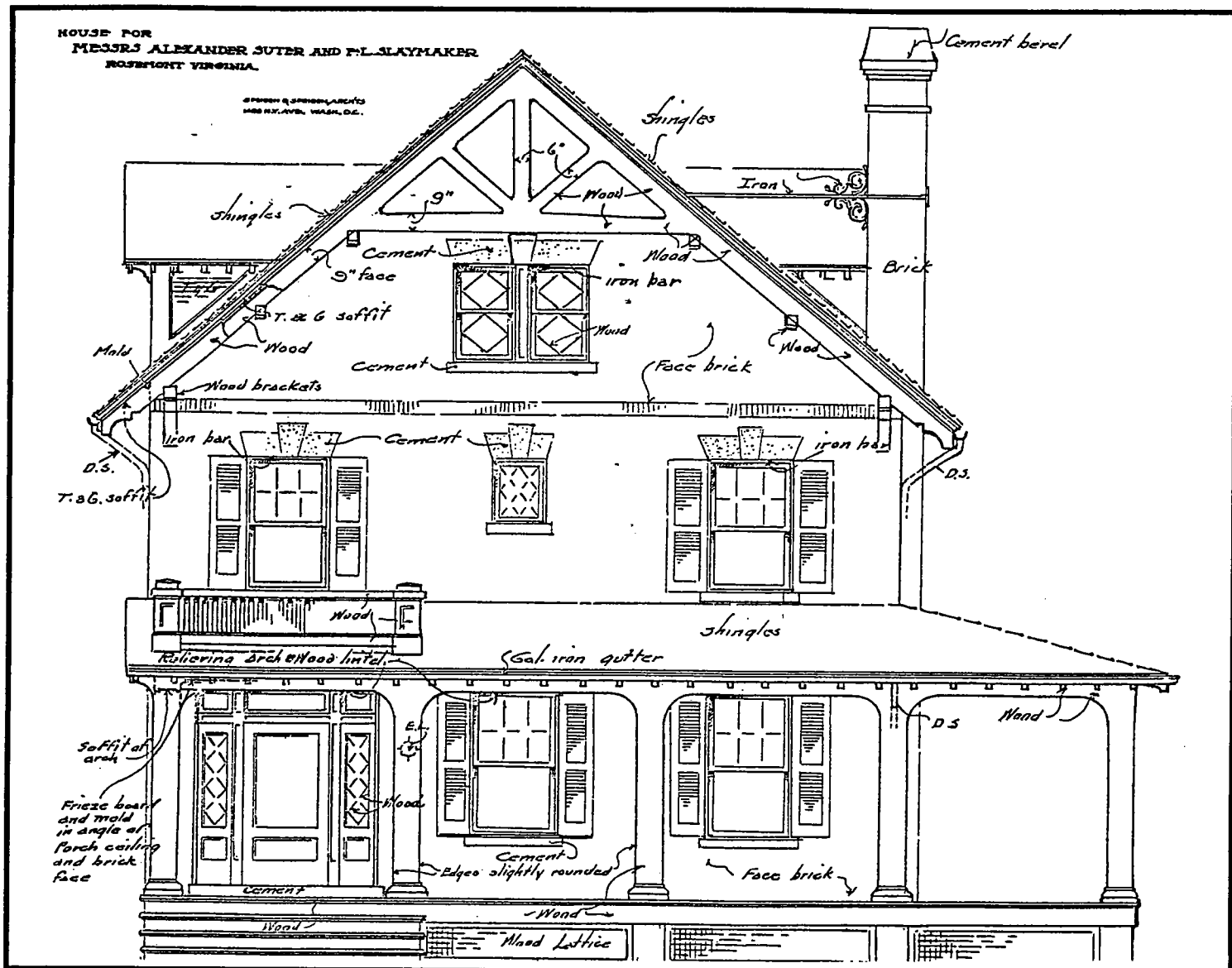
Perhaps closest to the heart of Manassas residents are the many Speiden-designed properties that are today in the Old Town Historic District. This District, recognized by the Local, State, and National Registers of Historic Places, boasts Old Town Hall along Center Street, the Hopkins Candy Factory on Battle, and Hibbs and Giddings Store on the corner of West and Center. Built between 1908 and 1915, these Speiden buildings were given features such as cupolas, castellated door surrounds, lead glass transoms, and other notable details. Albert Speiden was proud of the fact that at one time he had done work for every church in Manassas.

In 1906, the firm designed a new building for Manassas Baptist Church on Center Street which suffered extensive damage from fire in 1935. This church building, although it exists today, was changed extensively during the rebuilding. In 1923, Speiden designed Grace Methodist Church on the corner of Church and Main in the Gothic Revival style. Work was also performed for First Baptist, Trinity Episcopal, and Primitive Baptist. The firm prepared the blueprints for the third Sudley Methodist Church in western Prince William County (the first was destroyed during the Civil War, the second by fire).

A notable home designed by Albert Speiden was his own, constructed on Battle Street in 1904. At that time, designer and writer Gustav Stickley was arguably the most influential architect in America. In direct contrast to the lavish Victorians of the late 19th century, Stickley's vision



Office sign for Speiden and Speiden's G Street headquarters in Washington, DC (Museum Photo).



One of many house plans drawn by Speiden and Speiden for Suter and Slaymaker, builders of the Rosemont development in Alexandria (Museum Photo).

ran to stark, simple structures that evoked natural forms. His magazine, *The Craftsman*, (published from 1901-1917) promoted do-it-yourself homes and furnishings. Stickley felt that this created the most "honest" design and finished product. Speiden utilized several of Stickley's concepts in his own home, especially for the interior.

Albert Speiden designed his home with elements taken from the late-Victorian, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival styles. The white clapboard home with its comfortable front porch blends well on this street where turn of the century homes are the norm.

The interior is where Speiden's more adventurous side came into play. There he designed built-in cabinets, dark banisters, and dark beams, straight out of Stickley's vision for American living. Around the fireplace in the parlor are tiles with lilies hand painted by Albert Speiden, who used the lily as the firm's logo. On a side porch, now made into a music room, is a wall mural painted by Speiden. This

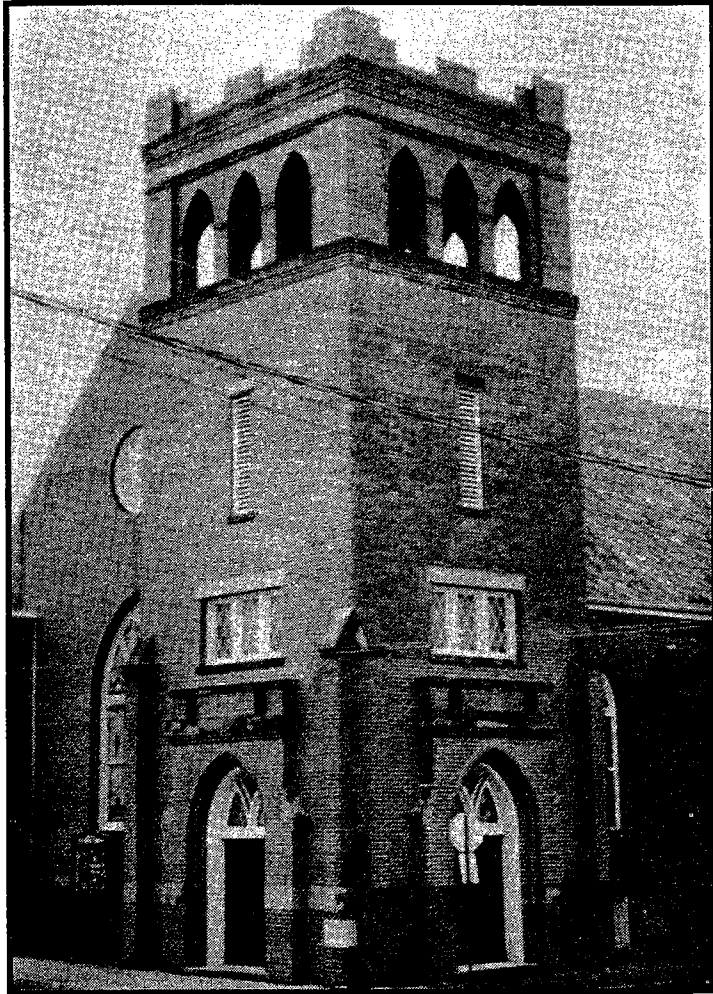
natural landscape scene fit into the mindset of the Craftsman as articulated by Stickley.

Craftsman interior decor became known as Mission. The term Mission brought to mind the purity and simplicity of religious enclaves and their furnishings. The oak chairs and rectilinear tables in the Mission style that once sold for less than \$50 can now go into six figures. Albert Speiden built many of his own furnishings, especially for his office. Stacking shelves of dark wood, wooden flat files for architectural plans, and a padded bench are among the furnishings he created in the Mission style.

Speiden also designed his home around an existing cistern that originally acted as the water supply for the house next door. The house was built over the cistern, which ended up under the porch. Rainwater collected on the roof was carried to the underground cistern by pipes, flowing through a filter along the way. This acted as the water supply for the Speidens and once saved the house

next door during a fire, as the firemen pumped from that source.

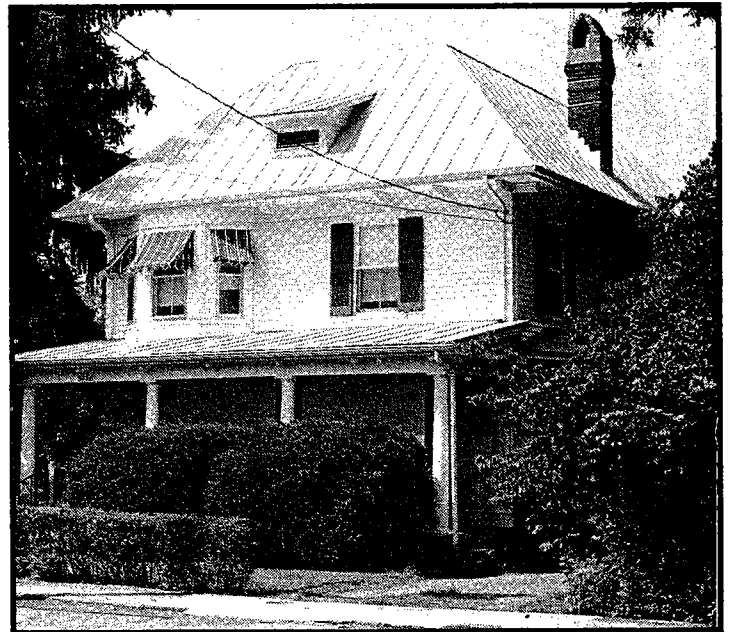
Albert Speiden left Manassas not only an architectural legacy but also one of service. He served on the Town



Grace United Methodist Church, Manassas. Designed by Albert Speiden in 1923 (Museum Photo).

Council from 1909-1919 and saw the creation of modern utilities in the community. Another of his loves was the Manassas Volunteer Fire Company, with which he served for many years and was the first president. The Albert Speiden Memorial Award, created by daughter Virginia Speiden Carper, is still given each year to an outstanding volunteer fireman.

In 1988, Mrs. Carper donated the Speiden Collection to The Manassas Museum where it will be preserved for future generations. Mrs. Carper and her husband Lewis live in the home designed by Albert Speiden on Battle Street and have preserved the home and its interior with little change. As with many things, the work of Speiden and Speiden and the surviving examples of their creative effort will only become better known and more valued with time.



Albert Speiden's home on Battle Street (1980 Museum Photo).

Stonewall Jackson "Leaves" Manassas February 28th!

If you haven't seen the Museum's special exhibit, "Stonewall Jackson Returns To Manassas," you had better hurry! The exhibit, which features artifacts borrowed from six Virginia museums, closes February 28th.

The March-April issue of *Word From The Junction* will contain information on future exhibits at the Museum.

