

## On the Trail Again    August 2009 – Marion, Alabama

We left Selma after lunch and proceeded to Marion. On the drive to Marion, there were amazing kudzu topiaries: teddy bears, dogs, etc. I also could see numerous elephants; probably because we were entering University of Alabama territory! No, I had not been drinking wine! Pecan groves and pine trees were all along the trail.

Our first stop in Marion was to take this photo of the United Methodist Church. Notice the roof; it reminded us an English village.



Marion is home to Judson College and Marion Military Institute and numerous beautiful antebellum homes.



The antebellum homes made us feel that we were definitely in the old south. However, we quickly met several of the business people of Marion and realized that we were back in 2009! We met Jim Gilliland who owns [Jim's ARTIFACTS](#) which is a shop that specializes in local/Alabama and Southern related books, ephemera, art and antiques. (I learned a new word in Marion: ephemera.)

You may recognize Jim's shop on 104 Green Street as the bakery where the eccentric Greek broke the window and stole the top of the wedding cake from the movie "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter". The movie was based on the book which is often referred to as a southern classic by Carson McCullers of Columbus. Looking across the street at the court house, you may also recognize other scenes from the movie. I know you won't believe this, but we were listening to the cd audio book, "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter", on our way to Marion. Not because we knew anything about the book, movie or where it was filmed; simply because it was in the Auburn library and Ray checked out a book by a southern author. It was an eerie coincidence!

Jim's shop is not a bakery, but it, indeed, is filled with tempting objects to buy.

Jim proceeded to introduce us to several other people along this street. JoAnne of La Belle Harmonie and I have had similar computer experience; she actually knew that CPM was one of the first PC operating systems. However, like me, Joanne is now in another field. She re-uses and re-designs antique jewelry into beautiful objects that are easily worn by a woman of today. She may be found at (see below) 207 Washington in Marion and, of course, on the [AlabamaAntiqueTrail.com](http://AlabamaAntiqueTrail.com).



We began to feel like we had found a new family. Upon entering two of the shops, the owners offered us a coke and snacks. While visiting one of the shops, we met a retired Judge who had previously been an antique dealer for years. We met two owners of the beautiful antebellum homes in Marion and visited one home where the owner also sold antiques, plants, and local primitive art. We were too late to take the tour of the homes. I plan to go back and take friends for the tour.

By the time Jim had introduced us to several of the local business owners and friends, it was time for dinner.

We had dinner at the Marion Steakhouse (334) 683-2121 at 110 East Green Street. The owner and manager welcomed us as if we were old friends. The two story restaurant has been restored using local recycled wood from buildings over 100 years old. The light fixtures and upstairs bar are also antiques.

At dusk, we sat on the balcony that overlooked the courthouse square and were served cool refreshing and authentic southern drinks. Later we ate dinner inside. I had the chicken salad which was excellent. Ray, of course, had a rare steak; cooked to perfection.







Jim introduced us to Laurette Turner who with her husband has carefully restored [Cedar Ridge Plantation](#) which was built in 1834 and is one of the oldest homes in Perry County. Of course, I could not wait to stay in an old farm house since I grew up on a farm. It still has its outbuildings: mule barn, carriage house, feed barn, smoke house, and slave house. The porches abound and, of course, the ceilings are painted "haint" blue to keep away the ghosts (and the bugs). It is located on 10 acres adjacent to hundreds of privately owned wooded land and just one mile from the courthouse and the restaurant where we were when we met Laurette.

I did not realize that when we reserved Cedar Ridge, that we had the entire home. There are three bedrooms (one down, and two up), a bath and half, a parlor, dining room and a fully equipped kitchen. The cost for the house is \$150 a night or 2 nights for \$270. It was great. It rained in the early morning; it was a tin roof. Need I say more? We slept under handmade quilts and ate on an antique table. The antique pieces and the architecture were primitive but felt so authentic.





After a leisurely early morning of exploring the plantation, biscuits and hot coffee, we explored the byways in and around Marion. We actually called to find out the cost of an antebellum home that was on the market. If we had found that home before we built the one in Auburn, I think we would have been living in Marion! It was the same period of the home that we tried to replicate!

According to Alabama's Historic guide, Marion was named in honor of Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox", hero of American Revolution. Sam Houston was married here to a local girl in 1840. The first Confederate flag and uniform were designed here by a teacher at the old Marion Female Seminary. Coretta Scott King was born and educated in the county. Learn all this and more at [www.perrycountyalabamachamber.com](http://www.perrycountyalabamachamber.com).

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