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## Home furnishing

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# Furman philanthropy

## Home furnishing

*DFAC works to make Cherrydale authentic, comfortable*

Soon after Cherrydale arrived on the Furman campus in the spring of 1999, a group of volunteers, at the request of President David Shi, began to consider how best to furnish the 1840s house. The challenge was to find a way to maintain the original tone of the home that belonged to James C. Furman, Furman's first president, and at the same time equip it to serve as the Alumni House.

The group that took on this task called itself the Decorative and Fine Arts Committee (DFAC). The committee decided that Cherrydale should be furnished in the style of a traditional, mid-19th-century home. To the extent possible, the committee agreed that objects and furnishings in Cherrydale would consist of Furman family pieces, items of historical interest to the university and pieces dating from the mid-1800s.

Over the years many items of furniture, art and decorative accessories have been given to Furman. These objects have been used in various places on campus — or stored in basements or closets. The DFAC quickly realized that it needed to discover what was already on campus before it asked others for help in furnishing Cherrydale.

The committee started by completing an inventory of every piece of art or decorative object on campus — all 1,000 of them. This inventory included descriptions of the items, their history, measurements and location on campus, and a digital image of each. A database of these items was created and is now maintained in the special collections department of the James B. Duke Library. The DFAC also developed a policy statement on how to manage the decorative and fine arts collections on campus, with guidelines for accepting, maintaining, refusing and disposing of gifts.

Once it was equipped with the inventory and a management policy, the DFAC finally felt it could begin to furnish the public rooms of Cherrydale.

A sideboard, case clock and corner cabinets from the collection of Allen P. Crawford '36 fit the scale of the rooms at Cherrydale and dated from the 1850s, or earlier. Oil paintings from Crawford's donated collection and historic portraits and paintings from the Special Collections archives in the library served as the first wall decorations. In the attic at White Oaks,



***The dining room table at Cherrydale was used by both Gordon and Lib Blackwell and John and Martha Johns during their terms as President and First Lady of Furman. A sisal rug currently protects the floor from heavy foot traffic.***

the president's home that was bequeathed to the university by Homozel Mickel Daniel, we discovered an assortment of chairs, lamps, vases, cache pots, desks and tables.

Since 1999, Furman has been fortunate to receive many additional gifts for Cherrydale. A washstand donated by Lucy Furman Arnold and a convenience chair given by Berkley Little were actually used by the Furman family when they lived in the house.

President emeritus Gordon W. Blackwell donated his mother's 1910 Chickering grand piano in honor of his late first wife, Elizabeth Lyles Blackwell. He also contributed a music cabinet that had been purchased by his mother and used by three generations of the Blackwell family. The large dining room table, used during their time in office by the Blackwells and by their successors, John and Martha Johns, has been restored by John Faris '37.

Today, Cherrydale is furnished modestly but elegantly. As pieces are donated that more closely meet the criteria established by the committee, they replace objects that have been used. As a result, Cherrydale is gradually being filled with lovely and often historic antique pieces that are also sturdy enough to be used by visiting groups.

One area of concern is the beautiful heart pine floors in Cherrydale, which have become scratched and scarred because of heavy foot traffic in the house. Sisal rugs have been placed in the living and dining rooms to protect the floors until suitable carpets can be found.

Not surprisingly, rugs are at the top of the wish list for Cherrydale. Specifically, the DFAC is looking for handmade Persian antique or semi-antique rugs in light medium to dark colors and in classic design. The sizes needed are (in feet): 12 x 12 to 15 x 15 for the dining room, and 8 x 10 to 5 x 15 in the living room. Antique carpets would set off the furniture and decorative items already in these rooms and would protect the floors from further damage.

If you have furnishings or other items that you believe might be appropriate for use in Cherrydale, please call Tom Triplitt, director of the Alumni Association, at 1-800-787-7533, or e-mail him at [tom.triplitt@furman.edu](mailto:tom.triplitt@furman.edu).

— Sarah Weaver Herring '66

*The author is chair of the Decorative and Fine Arts Committee.*