

Historic Huntsville Quarterly



A Publication of the
Historic Huntsville Foundation, Inc.

Seventy-five Cents

Vol. II, No. 2

Huntsville, Alabama

April-June, 1976

AWARD OF MERIT FROM THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Award of Merit is presented to a few selected individuals and groups chosen from several hundred nominations submitted or proposed to our preservation agency. The Alabama Historical Commission presents Awards of Merit for substantial accomplishments and significant contributions made in restoration, preservation, legislation and publication activities relating to Alabama's architectural, archaeological and historic resources.

The Historic Huntsville Foundation, Inc. is receiving a 1976 Award of Merit from the Alabama Historical Commission for the following reasons:

- ... Considerable contributions to the successful efforts of the Huntsville community to select, salvage and safeguard valuable historic and architectural evidences, and
- ... Substantial contribution to the Alabama Historical Commission's program of restoring and preserving the leading architectural, archaeological and historic landmarks in the state, and
- ... Important informational activity which aided the Historical Commission in the successful nomination of several historic structures to the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage, and
- ... Dealing, in a business like manner, with the circumstances of the proper manner to acquire, restore and maintain lasting landmarks in Huntsville, Alabama.

1976 AWARD OF MERIT

Presented to

HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION, INC.



for Outstanding service to the preservation of Alabama's heritage

Dwight Waller
Governor of Alabama

Emily S. McArthur
Member
Alabama Historical Commission



W. Gene Floyd
Executive Director,
Alabama Historical Commission

EDITOR'S REPORT

We are at a critical stage in our development as an association, for a number of reasons. Any new organization has the basic problem of maintaining interest and membership after the initial stimulus created by its formation abates after a period of time. Quite often, those most interested in the organization are apt to wring their hands and cry what have we done, what can we do now, then arrive at the doleful conclusion that the organization is not "going anywhere" or "doing anything." Others pick up this feeling and the organization becomes moribund.

Sometimes, in attempts to "do something," the leaders try to "create" things to do" and go off in all different directions. The organization becomes a hodgepodge of things "doing," with little or no cohesion. Eventually the organization ceases to function, or at least, to strive to meet the objectives set for it at its inception.

I think we are at this point. The last month or so, however, has proven to me that the organization is still as viable as ever, and still meeting the requirements set for it at its official creation.

We are doing "things," and perhaps just as important, we are being recognized, not only locally, but state-wide, for our efforts. We all can be proud of our young organization. We also have the chance to see it develop further, to help Huntsville to recognize and to appreciate its architectural heritage. We are now making an inventory of Huntsville architecture. When finished we will have better understanding of--and appreciation for--our architectural heritage. All of us can take pride in that the inventory was largely accomplished through the efforts of our organization.

We have been recognized by the Alabama Historical Commission for our efforts so far. Nice to know we are appreciated. Articles elsewhere in this issue highlight the efforts at inventory and the receiving of a certificate of merit from the Alabama Historical Commission.

It is the hope of this editor that the Historic Huntsville Quarterly will not attempt to compete with the Huntsville Historical Review in any way. While our membership is certainly concerned with the history of Huntsville, we primarily, I think, should be concerned with the architectural heritage and well being of Huntsville. We all should be doing more to identify historically and to preserve our architectural heritage. We should be actively working in close collaboration with any and all groups locally, regionally and state-wide who will enable us to further our goals. We should not forget that old cliché, divided we fall, united we stand. To this end, then, I have decided to discontinue the series I was originally asked to write for our quarterly by chairman Smith, for the articles I have already written for the Huntsville Times and the Quarterly are oriented to general facets of Huntsville and Tennessee Valley history. They really do not deal with our architectural heritage.

What we desperately need are articles, photographs, drawings and other illustrations that deal with our architectural heritage. Won't you please help? You can write or assist in writing and compiling articles concerning what should be our main interests. Let me know your ideas, for this really is your quarterly.

H. S. Marks



-JUNE MEETING-

Historic Huntsville Foundation in conjunction with the UAH Art Department proudly presented Mr. Barry Lewis, architectural historian. Mr. Lewis presented a program open to the public and sponsored by the two organizations on Sunday afternoon, June 6 at 2 p.m. A reception was held at the Dr. William Corley residence located in the Huntsville historic district of Twickenham (413 McClung). Following the reception, Mr. Lewis presented a lecture with slides entitled "The Greek Revival: America's First Modern Movement." The lecture was presented in the auditorium of the Masonic Temple, located about 100 yards from Dr. Corley's residence.

On June 9, Mr. Lewis presented a second lecture in Room 419 of the Humanities Building on the UAH Campus, entitled, "The Centennial Decade: Prelude to a New Age."

Mr. Lewis teaches the history of New York commercial architecture at the New School for Social Research in New York City. He is also working with the Municipal Arts Society of New York to establish a series of walking tours of New York architecture. Additionally, he is a faculty member of the Society's evening school. Mr. Lewis was also instrumental in setting up the guided tours of the cast-iron district of New York City in conjunction with Friends of Cast Iron Architecture Foundation.

DUES NOTICE!!! DUES NOTICE!!! DUES NOTICE!!! DUES NOTICE!!!

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN -- AGAIN -- AGAIN -- AGAIN _

Please send your check in the appropriate amount to:

Historic Huntsville Foundation

446 Central Bank Building

Huntsville, AL 35801

Dues Notice!

DUES NOTICE, AGAIN

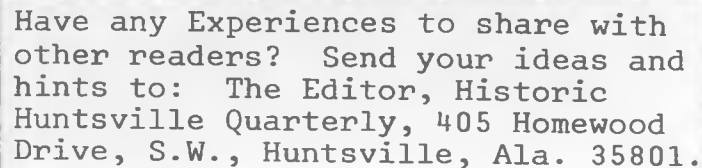


**Membership in the Historic
Huntsville Foundation**

If you want to become a member of the Historic Huntsville Foundation, and to assist in enhancing Huntsville's future by preserving its significant architectural and historic heritage, send your name, address, telephone number (home and office) and check in the appropriate amount (made payable to the Historic Huntsville Foundation Inc.) to: Mr. C. Lynwood Smith, Jr., Chairperson, Membership Committee, Historic Huntsville Foundation, 446 Central Bank Building, Huntsville, 35801.

MEMBERSHIP CLASSES

Student.	\$ 2.50
Active (Individual).	10.00
Business.	50.00
Patron.	25. - 99.00
Benefactor.	100. or more



Have any Experiences to share with other readers? Send your ideas and hints to: The Editor, Historic Huntsville Quarterly, 405 Homewood Drive, S.W., Huntsville, Ala. 35801.

INVENTORY OF HUNTSVILLE ARCHITECTURE

by

Mrs. Linda Bayer
Executive Director, Historical
Building Survey of The City of
Huntsville Planning Commission

The inventory of Huntsville architecture is going very well and new and interesting information turns up everyday. The problem is that I am just beginning to realize the tremendous scope of the project and the fascinating potential which it has.

The decision was made to concentrate on post bellum buildings in that the antebellum structures in Huntsville have already received a great deal of attention in the way of books, pamphlets, and open house tours. There is a tendency in Huntsville, as elsewhere, to minimize the importance of buildings erected since 1870 and even more so those built since the turn of the century. Our lack of appreciation of buildings erected in 1920's and 1930's is the result of our being too close to them in time. And there are still too many examples of them available. By the year 2025, people will be fascinated with the quaint cottages and bungalows of the 1930's and will be annoyed at the lack of foresight we displayed in failing to preserve them. Consequently, the inventory will include buildings through the 1930's as worthy of documentation.

The inventory will also cover many smaller, less expensive homes. After all, the majority of people live in middle and lower class housing. We know very well how the wealthy Huntsvillian lived before the Civil War, but the average man's house was not survived as well and our notions about it are less distinct. Also, I believe we'll find that the smaller house developed a little differently than the mansion. For example, the middle class housewife could afford little or no domestic help, so the indoor kitchen became a part of the smaller house before it was moved into the larger one where help to carry the food from out building to dining room was available.

Each structure selected is documented by the same method so that the material on each will be comparable. A standard form is used which is similar to that set up by the Historic American Building Survey. This provides a written description of the building and includes any historical events and descriptions connected with it. A floor plan is drawn to provide an idea of the layout and the size of the individual rooms. Photographs are made of the exterior and of any interesting interior features. The building is dated by tracing deeds. The real estate tax assessments, newspaper accounts and old fire insurance maps. In this way many houses can be dated to the year.

As we assemble this data, we are also collecting information on the architects who worked in Huntsville and we will try to trace the careers of those who had the most impact. A listing of the architects and their buildings will be part of the final report.

Another area which needs documentation is commercial building in Huntsville including the factories and their villages. This section may not be as glamorous as homes but it is probably more important as commercial buildings tend to have a shorter life span. This is particularly true of small buildings which can not provide the financial return expected by the businessman.

This inventory is being conducted by two full time employees of the Huntsville Planning Commission, Pat Ryan, my assistant, and myself. Our salaries are being paid by federal funds. Bill Lanier, also of the Planning Commission, has just received a federal grant to study those buildings which overlap in many instances, we will be working together and some our expenses can be borne by this grant.

At the end of the study, the data collected will be filed - probably with the public library - so that it will be available to all. Also it is hoped that an attractive publication can be written to make the results more readily available to a wider audience and to stimulate more interest in and appreciation of Huntsville's vast range of architectural styles.



Historic Huntsville Quarterly

EDITOR. Henry Marks
ASSOCIATE EDITOR. . . Claire Johnston

Published four times annually by the
Historic Huntsville Foundation, Inc.,
P. O. Box 2008, Huntsville, Ala. 35804.

Subscriptions: free to all members
of the Historic Huntsville Foundation;
\$2.50 per year to all others.



ATTENTION
All Artisans, Carpenters &
Craftsmen
Wishing to Advertise
Trades & Skills
Useful in the Restoration
of Historic Homes
Are Invited
to Submit Notices to
the Historic Huntsville Quarterly
Phone: 534-1404 or 881-2174

Parts Of A Staircase

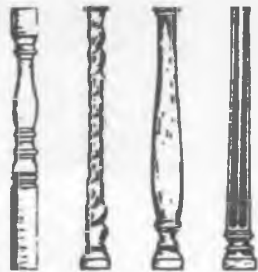


A staircase is one of the most distinctive features in an old house. There are not only many parts to a staircase but many confusing terms which apply. The following is an effort to help you understand your staircase.

Balustrade — The combination of balusters and posts topped by a hand rail.

Baluster — A small pillar or column, supporting a hand rail.

In the late 18th century, it became fashionable to have turned, spiral or fluted style balusters. Also integral to the style of a staircase was whether a step held one, two or three balusters.



Newel Post — Usually the lowest post of the stair, that at the start. In a winding staircase, it is the central pillar from which the steps radiate. In a square staircase it is the principal post at the angles which support the handrail.

Many beautiful newel posts are found in old New England houses. Ship carvers who lived in seacoast towns would carve them in one piece, with great attention to detail.



Hand Rail — Topping the balusters and secured to the newel posts at each end.



Scroll — A spiral turn at the end of a stair rail.

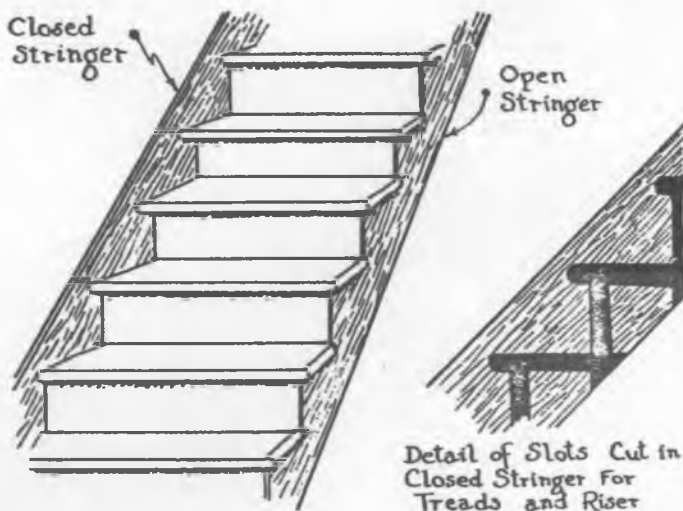
"Banister" is a confusing colloquialism often used to refer to a hand rail or a baluster, but it is a term which lacks a precise architectural definition.

Spandrel — The triangular surface between the outer string of a stair and the floor. Designs are carved on a spandrel in many staircases.



Spandrel Ornaments

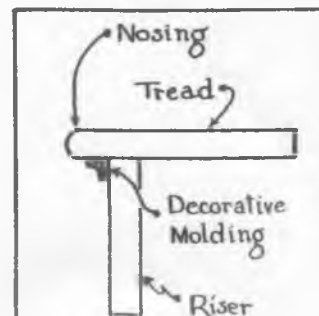
Stringer — The support of the steps of a stair. In an open-stringer staircase, the top edges of the stringers are cut out saw-tooth fashion, and the steps fitted to them. In a closed-stringer staircase, the edges of the stringers are straight, but grooves are cut into their inside faces to support the steps.



Tread — The horizontal part of a step.

Riser — The vertical part of a step.

Nosing — A small, molded projection occurring on the edges of steps and treads.





DISTINGUISHED AREA CITIZENS

WILLIAM IRVIN ADAIR

-by-

Henry S. Marks

Many of the early pioneers of the Tennessee Valley were born in Virginia, North Carolina or Georgia, but William Irvin Adair came from Kentucky. A nephew of General John Adair, governor of Kentucky from 1820 to 1824, he served in the War of 1812 as a captain in a regiment from his native state and was transferred to the regular army after the war.

Adair came to Alabama in 1818 after resigning his commission. He first tried farming but soon began the study of law. In those days one did not go to law school to study, even in relatively populous Madison County. According to the Alabama Republican, Huntsville's first newspaper, Madison County in the early 1820s had the largest population of any in the state: 22,066 in 1824. Limestone County was next, with 11,893; Tuscaloosa County ranked third, with 10,183 inhabitants.

Instead of going to college for an education, most people had to study in their home community. The best chance for material success in life was to study with someone who was well accepted

in the community. Doctors or lawyers were good bets. They were generally respected and usually did well financially. So Adair turned to the legal profession.

He established his practice in Huntsville. Soon successful, he began to have political aspirations - nothing unusual for lawyers of his day.

Adair's political career began as a representative of Madison County to the state legislature in 1822. The next year he was elected speaker - quite a distinction, for Alabama had become a state just four years before.

The biggest issue then before the legislature was the question of the creation of a state bank, an issue which of course involved lawmaker Adair.

The State Banking Act of 1821 had been passed by the legislature but vetoed by Gov. Israel Pickens. The governor was in favor of the establishment of a state bank, but not under the terms of the 1821 act.

After Pickens' re-election in the gubernatorial race of 1823, he got the provisions he wanted in a new bank charter bill. The state bank was created and opened its doors

The Alabama Republican, in its issue of Nov. 12, 1824, reprinted a long article from a recent issue of the Cahaba Press discussing in detail the development of the bank and in terms very optimistic about its future.

Alas, the paper was not a good prognosticator, and the bank remained a political and economic issue until its liquidation during the administration of Gov. Joshua Martin (1845-1847).

William Adair's last public service was as a jurist. In November, 1832, he was elected to the fifth circuit court bench, and he held this office until his death three years later. So ended the life of a man who today is a little-known figure of early Alabama History, yet who was prominent in his time and an important factor in Tennessee Valley life not many decades after the American Revolution being celebrated in this Bicentennial observance.



DUES NOTICE!!!

DUES NOTICE!!!

CHARACTERS

**Officers of the Historic Huntsville
Foundation, Inc.**

CHAIRMAN: C. Lynwood Smith, Jr.
 VICE-CHAIRMAN: Jeffrey Bayer
 TREASURER: Tommy Beason
 SECRETARY: John R. Wynn
 IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIRMAN: C. Lynwood Smith,
 Jr.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Leroy Simms	Richard E. Oliver
James S. Wall	Mrs. Sandra Turner
Mrs. Sarah Batson	Mrs. Pat Laxon
Hall Bryant, Sr.	J. Earl Robertson
John E. Hoar	James Record
Harvie P. Jones	Mrs. Joseph C. Moquin
Richard Van Valkenburgh, Jr.	Tommy Beason
John R. Wynn	Mrs. Cynthia Caffey
Mrs. Shannon Allison	John G. Gann
Robert G. Cope	Bill Offenloch
Mrs. Linda Doud	Bill Nailen
Bill King	Lynwood Smith





DUES

NOTICE!



Historical citation

FROM:

The Historic Huntsville Foundation, Inc.

P. O. Box 2008

Huntsville, Alabama 35804