

Two Dollars



Summer/Fall

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THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY

of Local Architecture and Preservation

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Contents

- 2 FROM THE EDITOR
- 3 HAVING WONDERFUL TIME, WISH YOU WERE HERE
by Ralph Allen
- 7 A TOURIST'S-EYE-VIEW OF HUNTSVILLE:
PICTURE POSTCARDS - EARLY 1900'S TO MID 1950'S
- 8 Street Scenes - Downtown
- 13 Courthouses
- 15 Buildings - Public and Commercial
- 21 Hotels
- 24 Schools
- 27 Churches
- 31 Street Scenes, - Residential
- 33 Homes
- 37 Mills
- 40 The Big Spring
- 43 Monte Sano
- 46 Motels
- 49 Miscellaneous

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from the Editor . . .

Special thanks are in order to the owners of the postcard collections upon which this **Quarterly** is based: Ralph Allen, Linda Bayer, Margaret Henson, and Rane Pruitt and the Huntsville Public Library. Because of their generosity in sharing their postcard collections, it is possible to present some different and changing views of Huntsville and the surrounding area.

There were several hundred postcards dating from the turn of the century to the present in these four collections, and it was no easy task to whittle the selection down to a manageable number for publication. Unfortunately, it is not financially possible to use color photographs in our publication, so some of the charm of the hand-tinted hues of many of the cards is lost in black and white reproduction.

On the following pages in the brief captions, information printed on the postcards is presented in quotation marks. Since postcards have no dates printed on them, the postmark is one way to give the approximate date of the scene; however, quite a few of the cards were never mailed. But from the many cards that WERE mailed, the earliest postmark available is noted in the captions. Dates from other sources are also noted when possible.

In the last issue of the **Quarterly** (Spring 1987), the original early photographs of the Huntsville Daily Times Building belong to the H. C. Blake Company. Mr. Hall Bryant Jr. allowed Harvie Jones to make copies of the pictures which were used for publication. We regret the oversight of not including this information in the last issue.



POSTCARD COLLECTIONS:

Ralph Allen: pp. 7, 8 top, 9, 10 top, 11 top, 12, 13, 14 top, 16 bottom, 18 bottom, 19 bottom, 20 top, 21 top, 22 top, 24, 25, 26, 27 top, 28 top, 31, 32, 33 top, 34 bottom, 35, 36 bottom, 37 top, 40 bottom, 42 top, 43, 44, 45 top, 46 top, 47, 50 bottom, 52 bottom.

Linda Bayer: pp. 22 bottom, 33 bottom, 37 bottom, 38 bottom, 39, 41, 48, 49.

Margaret Henson: pp. 17 top, 50 top, 51 bottom.

Huntsville Public Library: Cover; pp. 4, 8 bottom, 10 bottom, 11 bottom, 14 bottom, 15, 16 top, 17 bottom, 18 top, 19 top, 20 bottom, 21 bottom, 23, 27 bottom, 28 bottom, 29, 30, 34 top, 36 top, 38 top, 40 top, 42 bottom, 45 bottom, 46 bottom, 51 top, 52 top.

Having



Wonderful Time,

Wish You Were Here

by Ralph Allen

"We just have to send a card to Aunt Mary before we leave." Does that sound familiar? Probably all of us have sent postcards to our friends and relatives while we were on a trip to a distant town, or while vacationing at the coast, just to let the people back home know that we got there safely and to let them "see" the wonderful place where we were staying. It was so simple to send a postcard. Usually, hotels and motels provided free cards, and even if they didn't, one could always get a postcard around the corner at the drug store.

My own fascination with postcards began about five years ago when I found an old card of an Athens State College building that my architectural firm was renovating. Since postcards are a source of early views of buildings, I started looking through boxes of cards at antique shops and flea markets in hopes of finding other views of local buildings. The cards were usually inexpensive and much easier to carry than other antiques, so before long, I was hooked.

Deltiology, the official term for collecting post-

COVER:

"Big Spring Basin, Huntsville, Ala." An early hand-tinted postcard, postmarked 1910. The building at top is the back of one of the old West Side Square buildings known as "Cotton Row," now demolished.



The postmark on this Postal Card is dated July 11, Montgomery, Ala. Although no year is printed on the postmark, a dateline above the message on the back of the card gives the year as 1875.

cards, comes in many forms. I try to limit my collecting to view cards of North Alabama cities, other small Alabama cities, and Alabama courthouses. (One could go broke buying all the cards available of Birmingham, Montgomery, and Mobile.) However, occasionally I find myself looking at the beautiful "Gruss Aus" cards (meaning "Greetings From") with their elaborate hand-drawn designs.

Some people collect views of motels, ships, state capitols, dogs, cats, real photographs, foreign views, greeting cards, art cards, and even the notorious views of nudes (usually French, of course). Then there are the unusual cards such as fill-in-the-blank cards, puzzle cards, name cards, installment cards, comic cards, and

even strange-material cards made of leather, wood, aluminum, birch bark, cloth or even peat moss.

America's love affair with the postcard started two years before the turn of the century when Congress passed laws that allowed privately printed cards to be sent at the same one-cent rate as the official post office "postals." Up to that point, the private cards were not widely used since it cost two cents to send them, the same rate as for regular letters. Once the rate was reduced, the rush was on to send, trade, and collect postcards.

These early private postcards were slightly different from the ones that we see today in the souvenir shops and bookstores. The "private mailing cards," pro-

duced from 1898 through 1901, had to be three and one-quarter inches by five and one-half inches in size, and have "Private Mailing Card - Authorized by Act of Congress on May 19, 1898" printed on the address side. Any messages that the sender wished to convey were allowed only on the picture side of the card, or else the two-cent letter rate would apply.

In December of 1901, legislation was passed that allowed the words "Post Card" to be printed on the back, and changed the size to three and one-half inches by five and one-half inches. All messages still had to be written on the picture side until 1907 when the "divided back" was permitted by Congress. This allowed one half of the address side to be used for a short message and meant that people didn't have to write all over the picture any more.

Many very early postcards featured artist's free-hand designs or prints of black and white photographs, but many of the designs and photographs were hand-tinted before the printing process, so that color cards were common long before color film was available.

The tensions of war in 1915 saw the end of the "Golden Age of Postcards." Up until that time, most of the postcards sold in the United States were printed in Germany because of their superior technology in printing. This was no longer possible with the outbreak of World War I.

Another factor in the decline of postcard mania was the changing nature of American social and cultural interests. When postcards first became available, the public rushed to buy this new fad item because it allowed them to send and collect actual views of far away places. But the war brought about changes and hardships, and people no longer had time to indulge in such leisure activities.

The next cards to appear were the "white border" cards. These were simply cards with a white border around the picture, usually with the location and a description of the picture printed in the border. These cards were generally produced from 1916 to 1930.

Between 1930 and World War II, color cards were produced on a new type of paper that had a linen-like finish. These are the cards that most of us are familiar with, showing motels and various other scenes, including the accordion-type folder cards with multiple views of places like Hot Springs and Niagara Falls.

The cards currently being offered are known as "chrome" cards. These were first produced around 1940 and have developed into the color photograph cards with the glossy finish that are found on the racks today. The newer cards are a larger size, called "continental," and are generally not liked by serious collectors; however, the original private mailing cards were

looked down upon by collectors of the postal cards issued by the postal service.

The largest producer of American postcards was the Curt Teich Postcard Company located in Wauconda, Illinois. They produced over one million view cards of the United States between 1898 and 1975. Also, it was the only company that, after 1930, keyed its cards with a number which allowed the card to be dated. The early cards were numbered sequentially to number 123,000 in 1929. Beginning in 1930, a new system was used which assigned a letter to each decade, and a single number for each year within the decade. So, the 1930's cards would have an "A" in the number, the 1940's a "B," etc.

Locally, favorites of Curt Teich and the other publishers of Huntsville cards were the Big Spring and the courthouse(s). They were photographed from every angle and in every season. The

most interesting and least common cards are the views of street scenes such as Randolph, Holmes, Washington, and Jefferson streets. These scenes include not only the buildings, but people, buggies, cars, trolley tracks, and trees. These views, looking down the brick and dirt streets of an era long gone, give a feeling of the character of early twentieth century Huntsville.

Postcards continue to be a good way to keep friends and relatives updated on one's latest trip. And they are an easy way to record a trip if the traveler doesn't want to bother with a camera. Unfortunately, most people today would rather call than write. But when you think about it, wouldn't you prefer to get a nice postcard? After all, a postcard is a better keepsake than a listing on your phone bill showing that you called. So, go out and send a postcard today (before the rate goes up).

Sources:

James Lewis Lowe, **Standard Postcard Catalog**, Ridley Park, Pennsylvania, Deltiologists of America, 1982.

Scan Newsletter, November 1985.



RALPH ALLEN is an architect with the firm of Jones and Herrin and is currently Chairman of Historic Huntsville Foundation.



A Tourist's Eye-view of Huntsville:

Local Postcards

Early 1900's to Mid 1950's



This humorous postcard was never used nor dated. The pre-occupied sweethearts have wet paint across their backsides, oblivious to the sign on the bench which warns of "Fresh Paint," while the printed script at top declares, "Altho' a little off colour." Printed at bottom left is "Souvenir of Huntsville, Ala."



TOP: "Washington St., Huntsville, Ala." Shown at right, around the turn of the century, are buildings on what is now East Side Square, looking north; at far left is North Side Square. **BOTTOM:** "Street Scene - Huntsville, Alabama." Similar view as above, during the 1940's.



H-12—Washington Street Looking North, Huntsville, Ala.



TOP: "Washington Street Looking North, Huntsville, Ala." Circa 1941 view. **BOTTOM:** "Downtown Huntsville, Ala. This view shows part of the bustling city of Huntsville." Similar to preceding views; notice how some of the buildings have changed over the years.





TOP: "Jefferson Street, Huntsville, Ala." 1907 postmark. Looking north from Cotton Row (far left) on West Side Square; right background shows North Side Square. **BOTTOM:** "Street Scene, Huntsville, Ala." 1907 postmark. Looking south toward Madison St. from Cotton Row; left background shows South Side Square.





TOP: "Street Scene, Huntsville, Ala." 1908 postmark. Looking west along North Side Square. **BOTTOM:** "Street Scene, Huntsville, Ala." 1947 postmark. Looking east along North Side Square.





TENNESSEE VALLEY BANK BUILDING, JEFFERSON STREET, HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

TOP: "Tennessee Valley Bank Building, Jefferson Street, Huntsville, Ala." View looking north. Built 1925, now called the Terry-Hutchens Building; NW corner of Jefferson and Clinton.
BOTTOM: "Aerial View of Main Business Section, Huntsville, Ala." Circa 1951 view.



Aerial View of Main Business Section
Huntsville - Alabama



TOP: "County Court House, Huntsville, Ala." East Side Square buildings are in the background. **BOTTOM:** "Court House, Huntsville, Ala." 1923 postmark.



20104—*Court House, HUNTSVILLE, Ala.*



TOP: "Court House, Huntsville, Ala." 1907 postmark. The city's second courthouse, 1840-1913, was designed and built by local architect George Steele. **BOTTOM:** "County Court House, Huntsville, Alabama." The third courthouse was built in 1914, demolished in 1964.





TOP: "Deer in Court House Park, Huntsville, Ala." This was during the era of the second courthouse.
BOTTOM: "National Bank, Huntsville, Ala." 1908 postmark. Designed and built in 1840 by George Steele. Now First Alabama Bank, south corner of West Side Square.





TOP: "Federal Square, Huntsville, Ala." Old Post Office, built 1888-90, demolished 1954; was located on the west side of Green St. between Eustis and Randolph. **BOTTOM:** "S. O. Holmes, Furniture, Huntsville, Ala." 1911 postmark. With its facade covered with aluminum siding, the 1895 Van Valkenburgh building now houses Heilig-Meyers Furniture (formerly Sterchi's Furniture); NE corner of Jefferson and Clinton.





TOP: "Terry Brothers Co. Department Store, Huntsville, Ala." 1906 postmark. Formerly Dunnivant's Department Store, the 1905 building is now a renovated office complex; NE corner of Washington and Clinton. **BOTTOM:** "The Elks Theatre, Huntsville, Ala." 1906-1967, designed by local architect Edgar L. Love; was located about mid-block on the north side of Eustis between East Side Square and Green.





TOP: "Y.M.C.A., Huntsville, Ala." Built 1910-12, designed by Edgar L. Love; still serves as the Central Y.M.C.A. at the SE corner of Green and Randolph. **BOTTOM:** "Lobby of Y.M.C.A., Huntsville, Ala." 1913 postmark.





TOP: "Carnegie Library, Huntsville, Ala." 1915-1966, designed by Edgar L. Love; NW corner of Madison and Gates. **BOTTOM:** "Huntsville Hospital, Huntsville, Ala." 1926-1982; NW corner of Madison and Governors.





TOP: "The Daily Times Building, Huntsville, Ala." 1952 postmark. Built 1926-28, renovation is being planned; SW corner of Green and Holmes. **BOTTOM:** "U.S. Post Office and Court House, Huntsville, Ala." Built during the 1930's, still serves as downtown Post Office and Federal Court building; NE corner of Holmes and Jefferson. Under the New Deal Works Progress Administration, a mural, "Tennessee Valley Authority," was painted on Belgium linen by artist Xavier Gonzolez and installed in 1937 on the second floor.





TOP: "Hotel Yarbrough, Huntsville, Ala. Located on U.S. Highways 72 and 241 in the Heart of Downtown Huntsville. 80 Rooms, Modern, Steel Equipped, Fireproof, Coffee Shop, Free Parking." Built 1922-24, recently renovated for office space; SW corner of Holmes and Washington.

BOTTOM: "Hotel Russel Erskine, Huntsville, Ala." Built 1928-30, has been renovated for use as apartments for the handicapped and the elderly; SE corner of Clinton and Spragins.





TOP: "Hotel Twickenham, Huntsville, Ala." 1914-1975, SW corner of Clinton and Washington. **BOTTOM:** "Huntsville Hotel, Huntsville, Ala." 1909 postmark. Built 1858, burned 1910 and 1911; NW corner of Jefferson and North Side Square.





TOP: "Huntsville Hotel, Nov. 4, 1910." Fire destroyed the 1858 building but left a later annex intact (far right). The business sign at left identifies an "Electric Pressing Parlor." **BOTTOM:** "Huntsville Hotel Fire, Nov. 11, 1911." This fire demolished the annex and the Opera House next door.





STATE SCHOOL, HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

TOP: "State School, Huntsville, Alabama." Better known as the Huntsville Female Seminary; designed and built by George Steele in 1854-5 on Randolph, demolished in 1912. **BOTTOM:** "The Butler Training School, Huntsville, Ala." Built 1909, no longer standing; was located on Wells near Andrew Jackson Way.





TOP: "The Huntsville High School, Huntsville, Ala." 1912 postmark. Built 1902, demolished circa 1936-37 for new school to be built on the site; East Clinton between White and Calhoun. **BOTTOM:** "High School, Huntsville, Ala." Built 1927, presently being renovated for use as city schools administrative offices; SE corner of Randolph and White. Circa 1940 view.





TOP: "Carnegie Library, A. & M. College, Normal, Ala." 1912 postmark. BOTTOM: "Domestic Science Building, Normal, Ala."





TOP: "The East Hall, Oakwood College, Huntsville, Ala., built in 1910 ... This is the oldest building on the Oakwood College Campus." **BOTTOM:** "St. Mary's Catholic Church, Huntsville, Ala." The cornerstone was laid in 1861, but due to the Civil War the building was not completed until 1872; still in use as St. Mary's Church of the Visitation; 222 N. Jefferson.





TOP: "First Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala." 1909 postmark. 1894-95 to 1963; West Clinton at Gallatin (now Clinton and Spragins). **BOTTOM:** "First Methodist Church, Huntsville, Ala." 1908 postmark. Built 1867-74, still in use; NW corner Randolph and Green.

TOP: "The Episcopal Church, Huntsville, Ala." Built 1858-59, still in use; SW corner of Eustis and Green. This hand-tinted postcard depicts the church as being gray stone rather than red brick. **BOTTOM:** "The Church of the Nativity, Huntsville, Ala." Interior view of the above church with Christmas greenery.





TOP: "First Presbyterian Church, Huntsville, Ala." Built 1859, still in use; NW corner of Lincoln and Gates. **BOTTOM:** "Central Presbyterian Church, Huntsville, Ala." Built 1899, still in use; SE corner of Lincoln and Randolph.





TOP: "Randolph St., Huntsville, Ala." 1908 postmark. **BOTTOM:** "Scene on Franklin St., Huntsville, Ala."





TOP: "East Clinton St., Huntsville, Ala." **BOTTOM:** "East Holmes Street, Huntsville, Ala." 1911 postmark.





TOP: "Mr. M. B. Neece's Residence, Huntsville, Ala." 703 East Clinton, according to the 1911-12 City Directory. **BOTTOM:** "Sugg Home, Huntsville, Ala." East Holmes.

Sugg Home, Huntsville, Ala.





TOP: "The Grove, Huntsville, Ala." Built 1815, demolished mid-1920's. The Grove plantation house was located approximately at the site of the present Mental Health Center on Gallatin between Williams and Lowe. **BOTTOM:** "The Weeden Homestead, Huntsville, Alabama." Home of poet and artist Maria Howard Weeden. 1906 postmark. Built 1819, restored for use as a house museum; SE corner of Gates and Green.





Maj. Echols Home, Huntsville, Ala.

TOP: "Maj. Echols Home, Huntsville, Ala." 1911 postmark. Built circa 1814 by LeRoy Pope, now serves as the president's home for the University of Ala. in Huntsville; 403 Echols Ave. **BOTTOM:** "The Bierne Home, Erected 1837, Huntsville, Ala." 1908 postmark. The Bibb-Newman-Hutchens Home has been owned for many years by descendants of its builder, Gov. Thomas Bibb; 300 Williams Ave.



The Bierne Home, Erected 1837, Huntsville, Ala.



*Residence of Mr. & Mrs. Milton K. Cummings
Huntsville, Alabama*

TOP: "Residence of Mr. & Mrs. Milton K. Cummings, Huntsville, Alabama." Built circa 1850, now known as the Watkins-Moore-Rhett Home; 603 Adams Ave. Circa 1951 view. BOTTOM: "Oaklawn Plantation ... was built around 1844 and served as a hospital during the Spanish-American War ..." Also known as the Robinson-Luther Home; 1620 Meridian St.





TOP: "Bradley Home, Huntsville, Ala." 1911 postmark. Joseph J. Bradley was the agent for Merrimack Mills. Still standing, the house is located on Broad Place, near the mill buildings on Triana Blvd. **BOTTOM:** "Library at Dallas Mills, Huntsville, Ala." 1910 postmark.





TOP: "The Dallas Mills, Huntsville, Ala." 1906 postmark. Built 1891-92, still standing; located at the end of Dallas Ave. **BOTTOM:** "The Merrimack Mills, Huntsville, Ala." 1919 postmark. Built 1899-1901, still standing; Triana Blvd. between Drake and Bob Wallace Ave.



H-28 Merrimack Mfg. Co., a Model Cotton Mill and Village, Huntsville, Ala.



113461-18

TOP: "Merrimack Mfg. Co., a Model Cotton Mill and Village, Huntsville, Ala." **BOTTOM:** "Spinning Room, Merrimack Mills, Huntsville, Ala." 1908 postmark.





TOP: "Collins Photo., Huntsville, Ala." No postmark, but handwriting at bottom notes: "Negro Baptizing below Hv. Spring 1895." **BOTTOM:** "Big Spring, Huntsville, Ala. One Million Gallons per Hour." 1907 postmark.





TOP: "Big Spring, Huntsville, Ala." BOTTOM: "The Spring and Ford, Huntsville, Ala."





TOP: "A Close Up View of the Big Spring, Huntsville, Alabama. Capacity of Spring 24,000,000 Gallons Daily." BOTTOM: "The Big Spring, Huntsville, Ala. Twenty-four million gallons daily."





Capacity of Spring, 24,000,000 Gallons Daily

TOP: "Big Spring Park, Huntsville, Alabama. Capacity of Spring, 24,000,000 Gallons Daily. View of the Big Spring from which Huntsville secures its water supply." 1940 postmark.
BOTTOM: "Inspiration Point, Monte Sano Mountain, Elevation 2,000 Ft., Near Huntsville, Ala." 1941 postmark.



ELEVATION 2000 FT. NEAR HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

N-4—Public Lodge and one of the Cabins, Monte Sano State Park, Huntsville, Ala.



TOP: "Public Lodge and one of the Cabins, Monte Sano State Park, Huntsville, Ala. The Public Lodge and the modern fully equipped stone cabins in Monte Sano State Park are built entirely of stone obtained from the vast quantities of this stone on Monte Sano." Circa 1937 view. **BOTTOM:** "Beautiful View from Monte Sano State Park, Huntsville, Ala." Circa 1941 view.

N-14—Beautiful View from Monte Sano State Park, Huntsville, Ala.





TOP: "The Tavern, Monte Sano State Park, Huntsville, Ala." 1948 postmark. **BOTTOM:** "Monte Sano Tavern, Monte Sano State Park, Huntsville, Ala."





TOP LEFT: "Maple Grove Cottages, Huntsville, Ala. U.S. 241 N. 1 mi. - Private tile baths, Ceiling fans, cross ventilation, hot and cold running water, insulated, electric-panelray heated, garages, large shady lawns. Phone 1376." 1949 post-mark. **TOP RIGHT:** "El Rose Motel, U.S. 231 N. and 241 N. Inside City, Huntsville, Alabama. - 15 Air conditioned brick units, Hot water heat, Private tiled baths, Simmons equipped



El Rose Motel



U.S. 321M and 281N Inside City
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA



throughout.... In City Limits ... on Florida Short Route. Phone 281." **BOTTOM LEFT & RIGHT:** "Bon-Air Motel - Electric Heat, Air-Conditioned, Tile Showers, Beautyrest Mattresses, Excellent Air-Conditioned Restaurant in connection.... U.S. Highway 231, inside City limits, Nearest to Town, North of Huntsville, Alabama, Phone: Jefferson 2-5562." These three motels were on Meridian St.





TOP: "Monte Plaza Hotel Courts, Highways 38 & 241 South in City Limits, Huntsville, Alabama. - Featuring Large Rooms, Luxuriously furnished with Simmons Metal Furniture.... Tile Baths, Carpeted Floors, Automatic Electric Heat, Room Coolers, Fluorescent Lighting, Phones. Look Inside and You'll Stay."
BOTTOM: "Hospitality House Dining Room, Adjoining Monte Plaza Motel, Huntsville, Ala." These two were on Whitesburg Dr.





TOP: "Park Valley Motel, 6 Miles South of Huntsville, Ala. U.S. 231 and Ala. 38. Away from city noises...." 1954 postmark. **BOTTOM:** "Clement C. Clay Bridge over the Tennessee River near Huntsville, Ala. This magnificent structure over the Tennessee River is a few miles out of Huntsville on the newly paved 'Airline Highway' to Birmingham, Ala. and all points south." 1952 postmark.





SCENE ON FLINT RIVER,
HUNTSVILLE, ALA. 1908

TOP: "Scene on Flint River, Huntsville, Ala." BOTTOM:
"Cotton Picking. Huntsville, Ala." 1908 postmark.



COTTON PICKING

HUNTSVILLE, ALA.
 Received your card. Was very glad to hear of our
 sweet little boy's happy news. I hope you will
 stay for us return to perfect health. Love to you both
 & Mamma



TOP: "Fields of Water Cress, Huntsville, Alabama. 'Water Cress Capitol of the World.'" Circa 1956 view. BOTTOM: "Residence of M. H. Anderson, Madison, Ala." 1908 postmark.





TOP: "Southern R. R. Depot at Madison, Ala." 1912 postmark.
BOTTOM: "Union Passenger Station, Chase, Alabama." 1913 postmark. Surprisingly, there were no postcards of the Huntsville Railway Depot in these collections.



Union Passenger Station, Chase, Alabama

from

Historic Huntsville Foundation, Inc.

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Huntsville, Alabama 35804

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