

Fall

Three Dollars
1994

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY
Of Local Architecture & Preservation



ESTABLISHED 1879



Celebrating preservation Triumphs

Historic Huntsville Foundation 1974 - 1994

Harrison Brothers 1984 - 1994

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Founded 1974

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FRONT COVER: by Lee Harless

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE

QUARTERLY

of Local Architecture and Preservation

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editors note...

One does not like to draw attention to mistakes. In the summer issue, Lily Flagg, Huntsville's prized cow, was repeatedly misspelled. Our apologies to Lily and to Dorothy Scott Johnson.

From the Chairman:

Dear Foundation Members:

As you probably know, the Foundation has owned and operated Harrison Brothers Hardware for ten years. We believe that this is the only instance in the country where a preservation group has saved not only a structure, but the business housed in it. This could never have been accomplished without the volunteers who have staffed the store these ten years. As we approach the Christmas selling season, it is crucial that we have more volunteers to adequately staff this surviving business.

While our volunteers do not have many opportunities to have accolades lavished upon them, they do reap a few benefits by working at Harrison Brothers. Volunteers receive a ten percent discount during any month in which they work at least one four-hour shift. If a volunteer works three or more four-hour shifts during a month, a twenty percent discount is granted. In addition, volunteers are invited to attend a Christmas get-together and the yearly volunteer appreciation picnic. In addition, they are also afforded the opportunity to meet and welcome visitors to Huntsville who come here from all over the world. Perhaps the biggest benefit which the volunteers receive is the camaraderie which has built up among the volunteers themselves.

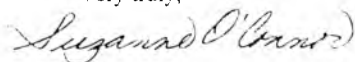
If you would like to help at the store, call either Aggie Carter or Wanda Carlen at 536-3631. You do not need to know how to operate a cash register or anything else for that matter! All we need is your presence to help continue the effort to keep Harrison Brothers in operation into the twenty-first century and beyond.

"Follies '94: Way Off Broadway" was a huge success. Thanks to all who helped as participants, attendees, or supporters. Without each and every one of you we could not have made Follies the truly joint project that it was with Alabama Constitution Village. Old Fashioned Trade Day was again blessed with perfect weather and a wonderful crowd. Gayle Milberger and Roger Nicholson and their committee members did a great job.

Other activities are in our future. The annual meeting of the Alabama Historical Commission is being held here October 21 - 23 and is being hosted by the Foundation and Alabama Constitution Village. We will then conclude this busy year with the annual membership tea at the Otey home in December. Spring will bring a benefit for the George Steele home owned by East Huntsville Baptist Church.

As you can see, there are many ways in which you can become **really involved** with the Foundation. Your help is needed to make **all** of these activities (and others in which we are involved) successes. We appreciate your membership but we also need YOU!!! Please call me at 539-8737 to volunteer and really put your membership to work!

Very truly,



Chairman

From the Editor:

Happy 20th Birthday H.H.F.

Happy 10th Anniversary Harrison Brothers.

When I turned twenty, I looked back and thought what a long time it had taken to reach that milestone. The Foundation turned twenty this year: in what seems a “twinkling of an eye,” and it too, is looking back. The accomplishments were fast coming: meeting preservation challenges from birth, when it helped to save the Steamboat Gothic house; through encouraging and assisting the formation of the Old Town Historic District; to saving the George Steele Home, Oak Place, and the Humphreys-Rogers House. Those are the Biggies. Preservation requires eternal vigilance and the Foundation membership has responded like Minutemen to perceived dangers and preservation opportunities (see letter to the Editor).

When the Foundation turned ten, which must translate to fifty in organization years, it took on the awesome responsibilities of purchasing, paying off the mortgage and continuing to run as a business, Harrison Brothers Hardware on the Square.

The theme of this *Quarterly*, Celebrating Preservation Triumphs, particularly heralds two recent honors heaped on Harrison Brothers. Hobnobbing with the likes of The Biltmore House and The Battleship *Texas*, Harrison Brothers has been selected to be featured in *America Restored*, published by the Preservation Press of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Harrison Brothers has also been chosen by the National Trust for inclusion in its 1995 engagement calendar, *Historic America*. Both are available at the store (see advertisements).

There is a spirit that is manifest at Harrison Brothers, and it is aptly captured by Diane Ellis. The breath that gives life to Harrison Brothers is the free labor provided by volunteers. Not your usual “gray lady,” these men and women of all ages are “hardware hawkers.” And they love it. But we need more volunteers to man the store.

This October marks the tenth anniversary of the Foundation’s unique property. The Chairman’s remark, “We believe that this is the only instance in the country where a preservation group has saved not only a structure, but the business housed in it,” is worth repeating. The store is a “living-working” history museum. Its walls and shelves are loaded with authentic memorabilia, its fixtures and ambiance engage all the senses in

synergistic nostalgia. Why, its no wonder people love to shop at Harrison Brothers! B. J. Robinson, the Chairman of the Management Committee, fills readers in on the secrets the old store emanates.

Another unusual aspect of Harrison Brothers and an important service of the Foundation, is the architectural warehouse located in the basement. George Harsh's grandfather's Tennessee resort made a lasting contribution to Huntsville's preservation and restoration. Truck loads of architectural elements made the transit from resort to warehouse to Huntsville homes and buildings in creative transformation. Thanks, George, to you and your family. Huntsville shows her appreciation each day and now our readers can enjoy this restoration miracle story.

The final article by Nancy Munson sheds light on the Harrison brothers as neighbors and, at the same time, takes us into a home originally theirs. Nancy weaves the history of the house with that of its occupants and neighbors. Enjoy!



In 1990 members of the Historic Huntsville Foundation gathered to burn the mortgage on Harrison Brothers Hardware. Foundation fund-raising projects raised more than \$50,000 to retire the \$30,000 mortgage balance. (Left to Right: Freeda Darnell, Nancy Van Valkenburg, and Ginger Fail.)

Alabama
Preservation
Press, April, 1994.

Letter to the Editor:

July 30, 1994

Mrs. Elise Stephens, Editor
Historic Huntsville Quarterly
P.O. Box 786
Huntsville, Alabama 35804

Dear Mrs. Stephens,

Thank you for the excellent summer edition of the *Quarterly*. Each article is important and informative. The variety of the articles reflects the variety of the work done and to be done by the Foundation.

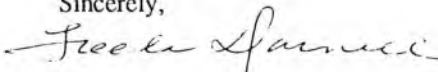
Perhaps your readers would like to know of the Foundation's part in the preservation of the A. G. Plummer house, the subject of Mr. Gary Griner's excellent article entitled, "A. G. Plummer, House Carpenter."

The 1984 HHF Board of Directors laughingly called themselves "Watchdogs." And watchdogs they were, for that was the "Harrison Brothers Hardware" year and the I-565 demolition year. There was great concern for very old trees, houses and businesses that were in the way of progress. We were also aware that the Church of the Nazarene needed space for a church life center and that they were planning to have the Plummer house, which they owned, demolished. As is often the case, the Board only learned about the danger to the Plummer house after the "deal was done." Brenda Courtney, Board Member, was asked to contact the church and possible buyers, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Orton. Mr. and Mrs. Orton were local antique dealers and Mrs. Courtney knew of their love for "old and valuable things." The Ortons wanted the house, the church wanted the space, Mr. Kennedy wanted the house-moving job and all was well. The Foundation was happy to be the matchmaker and very happy that the house was SAVED!

This timely article also helps point to another project that was begun in 1984, but not yet completed. Efforts were started to organize a preservation district for East Huntsville. Perhaps now that energetic and interested young couples, such as Heidi and Robert Contrell, live in the district, the time is right to renew the effort to preserve the area.

Thank you again for your efforts to report and record history.

Sincerely,



Freeda Brockway Darnell



Photo by Carol Highsmith; featured in *America Restored and Historic America*. (see Advertisements, page 177).

Down At The Store

by
Diane Ellis

For a good part of my first visit to Huntsville as a prospective future resident, I traveled back and forth between motel and conference center and all I saw was University Drive—lots of motels, an excess of fast food restaurants, awful traffic. It didn't look good. I began to worry about the soul of the place. Eventually someone offered to show me more of Huntsville, and so we headed downtown. We wound around the courthouse, parked near the square, and went into Harrison Brothers. By the time I walked to the back of the hardware side, I felt a wonderful sense of relief as I thought, "Everything's going to be all right."

If you've spent any time at Harrison Brothers, you know what I mean. Without getting mystical about it, I think most people who know the store would agree that a lot more goes on there than the sale of goods. There's the fellowship of the volunteers and the special sense of community shared by everyone who's worked in some way to make the store a success. There's the pleasure of keeping alive and useful, something that is old and meaningful. And, there's the enjoyment of meeting people from all over the world who visit the store and are glad they did.

As Pat Ryan, a store volunteer, says, "It's different from anything." The polite but *pro forma* "How are you doing today?" exchanged with sales people at big stores becomes, at Harrison Brothers, a genuine desire to connect with another person in a different time frame at a different speed.

The store has been owned and operated by Historic Huntsville Foundation for ten years and is currently co-managed by Aggie Carter and Wanda Carlen, with assistance from Jean Wasson (B.J. says she's the "right-hand man") and

Stephanie Williamson, a high school student who just came aboard in September. Volunteers staff the store.

Aggie was the store's first manager when it reopened, and she managed it by herself for three years. The Foundation had only \$3,000 to start the business. Since Aggie still had accounts with vendors from her days as owner of the general store in Mooresville and later Huntsville, she did some ordering from her old sources. Stock on hand included granite wear, cast-iron cookware, horse shoes, stove pipe, lamp parts, coal buckets, nails, knives, and some kitchen gadgets. The store still sells many of these items.

As news about plans to reopen the store got around, volunteers signed on to clean up and decide exactly what to save and what to sell. Since Aggie knew something about antiques, she knew what to keep. The clean-up crew dusted off the treasures and put them up high for safe display. The Harrison brother's idiosyncratic merchandising habits were evident: "On the hardware side of the store," Aggie remembers, "the lower shelves were full of old newspapers. When the Harrison brothers finished their newspapers they just shoved 'em in the shelves. But if you wanted, say, a toilet plunger, you had to get the ladder—all the merchandise was on the hard-to-get-to upper levels."

Day in and day out for a full six weeks, volunteers cleaned, sorted, dusted, and arranged while new inventory was coming in. A new layer of store lore and legend began to accumulate.

Charlotte Wallace was an early volunteer who came in to help with inventory and clean up. At some point, she was asked to clean the restroom. The place was a mess—corroded pipes, filthy baseboard, dirty everything. Charlotte tied up her hair, grabbed something sharp and proceeded to spend hours chipping away at the dirt ("I love a challenge"). After a day or more of working away on the toilet bowl, she had the room in pretty good shape.

There was a door on the other side of the little room that everyone thought led to a staircase to the balcony. Charlotte says that when she opened that door, “my feathers fell.” It was another bathroom, as dirty as the first one. “I drew the line! We never used that room and eventually they took out the toilet.” (Charlotte’s indomitable spirit earned her a special Survivor of the Decade award at the Volunteers’ Picnic last summer.)

Many volunteers and staff knew the store from the old days when the Harrison brothers operated it. Co-manager Wanda Carlen was the store’s first volunteer when it reopened in 1984. She had an interest in the store from visits there with her father and grandfather. She remembers a hot summer day when a friend of hers was about to leave town on vacation and had to have a last-minute item for Harrison Brothers. The woman drove downtown, finally found a place to park, and ran up to the store only to find the door closed and locked and bearing a sign that said simply “Too hot.”

One of the brothers once took Wanda’s husband to the back of the store to see those infamous X-rated frogs. The frogs were a novelty item in a shipment of cast-iron cookware, and the brothers called them “our little paperweights.” The store continues to carry these “novelties.” “People do buy them,” says Wanda, “sometimes in pairs ”

Volunteer Wally Reynolds shopped at the store in the Harrison brothers era and liked to check out the store windows regularly to see what new merchandise was in. Wally and a friend, John Cotten, were acolyte masters at the Episcopal Church of the Nativity and were in the habit of getting the servers started at the first service every Sunday, then slipping out of the church. After this happened several times, Fr. Joffrion decided to follow them to see where they went. He found them down at Harrison Brothers, checking out new goods in the storefront windows.

Cyrial Breece has volunteered at the store for 10 years. She’d been with the B. F. Goodrich store in Florence and

moved to Huntsville years ago with the Goodrich store. She had retail experience—"Grew up in merchandising"—and used to bring a sack lunch to Harrison's and eat by the coal burning stove (still there) and chat with the brothers.

Libby Brown once met a woman who had lived next door to a man whose job it was to take a boat and paddle about through the springs underneath the courthouse to see if everything was okay.

Pat Ryan remembers the brothers' insistence on wrapping and carrying purchases out the door and to the cars of customers, no matter how able the customers were to do this themselves. Pat bought clay pots at the store, and as a girl in her 20's, she felt silly having a 70-year old man carrying pots to her car parked in a garage blocks away. "At lease let me carry the drain," she remembers saying. "No, ma'am," was the reply.

Connections with people and the past are part of every store volunteer's experience. Jewell and Wally Reynolds' most heard comment is "Oh, I haven't seen one of these since ..." Wally remembers a man coming in to buy a doorbell. The customer told Wally that "This is probably where the one I'm replacing came from." Wally says people come back to Huntsville, visit the store and "provide answers to what went on here." "We're constantly hearing new tales," adds Jewell.

Bob Dobbins, who enjoys working at the store in part because "It's a lesson in history," had a customer tell him he'd last been in the store 40 years earlier. (He told Bob the store "seems to be cleaner than it was.")

Doris Robinson met a woman from her hometown in Pennsylvania who knew her family. Cliff Brantner met a customer from Hawaii who knew someone Cliff had been in the army with. When Janie Tanton's son married an English girl, Janie wanted to take a special gift to the girl's mother. She chose those musical cotton bales that play "Dixie." Her son's new mother-in-law loved them, and now winds one up

and lets it play for telephone callers if she has to leave the telephone for a moment.

Wanda remembers a volunteer waiting on customers from Georgia who mentioned having a dog that just outgrew them. The conversation continued and the volunteer ended up arranging a meeting and adopting the dog. The dog's name was changed to "Harrison."

The "spiritual" connections with other people and another time that are so rewarding for the volunteers and staff, take place in a very material setting, an old building chock full of aging artifacts and unique new items that are hard to resist. Harrison Brothers preserves the past, but the store is a modern business. Joanne Burchfield says the best part of working at Harrison Brothers is "shopping there." Jewell Reynolds says people come to the store because "we have things you can't find other places." Billie Moak calls it "one of the most unusual shopping places in Huntsville." Carlene Elod offers "a big salute to the co-managers who get great merchandise and do great window displays."

The "most unusual" category of items in the store includes the bored-well bucket, which few people are able to identify, and a special post hole digger. Aggie says people love the nostalgia items—cast-iron kettles, farm bells, popcorn poppers. The store does a lot of special orders through "want cards." B. J. Robinson, head of the store's Management Committee and a regular volunteer on Saturdays, gets many requests to buy items that aren't for sale. "Oh, I've got to have that to complete my ..." is a common appeal. Cliff Brantner (who claims he started volunteering because he wanted to look in all the drawers) sees a fellow who comes in regularly to try to buy the Coca-Cola clock. Jean Wasson remembers a woman coming in the store on Trade Day, seeing a new ice cream freezer on the floor and saying it "looks like it's hardly been used."

The 1903 cash register always delights customers. Bob Dobbins: "A lot of people look at the cash register and say,

‘Well, I’ve never seen anything like that before,’ and I say, ‘That’s right, and if you buy something I’ll show you how it works!’”

Not long ago, a navy admiral passed by the store late one afternoon and spotted the apple press in the window. He returned the next day, keeping his plane waiting two hours, and while his driver chatted with the staff, the admiral bought the apple press for his wife to use in their small orchard.

When I was last in the store, I saw a gentleman and his wife come around the corner from the hardware side to the gift side. They looked at the hat on the Harrison brothers’ desk, and I heard the man say, “That old black hat there looks like Granddaddy Whiteside.” There’s a line waiting for a story.

Harrison Brothers’ success is a triumph of imagination, determination, and work, a real preservation coup. Aggie said when the Foundation bought the store, they were told it was “the first nationwide preservation effort to run as a business.” It is thrilling now to be honored by the National Trust as one of only a few recognized successful preservation projects undertaken since 1980—up there with the big boys like the Biltmore Estate and San Francisco’s Palace Hotel.

If you want to join this wonderful family and be a little part of history, call the store and sign up. You don’t have to have lived a lot of history to love Harrison Brothers. Our newest staff person, Stephanie Williamson (“Old stuff fascinates me”) is only sixteen. Stephanie likes “the fact that it’s cluttered.” Me too.

HARRISON BROTHERS TRIVIA

A Photo Essay

by
B. J. Robinson

The volunteer's motto:

"If you can't find it at Harrison's, you probably didn't need it!"

Store Traditions:

- a. Brass numerals on the floor (1 to 16, some missing, attached in 1-yard increments, used for rope, chain, patio screening, etc. measurements). Lengths of chain, by the way, are cut with bolt cutters kept handy for the purpose. I've never had to cut chain, but I have stretched out about 40 yards of old metal window screening for someone's Florida room. The aisle on the hardware side is *almost* wide enough to lay it flat. And I cut it with tin snips.



- b. X-rated Frogs! Apparently a store tradition, and anatomically correct (if frogs were people). The manager found a supplier, and we keep them in stock at all times. Good sellers; dandy paperweights! Customers who ask about them are confirmed first to be over 21.

c. Memorabilia:

1. Restoring old advertising signs and prints; protecting them under glass with acid free backing. Displayed on the gifts side and at the back of the store.



2. Small paper sack half-filled, rolled, tied with string and carefully labeled "SAWDUST." A prized discovery by the Memorabilia Committee.



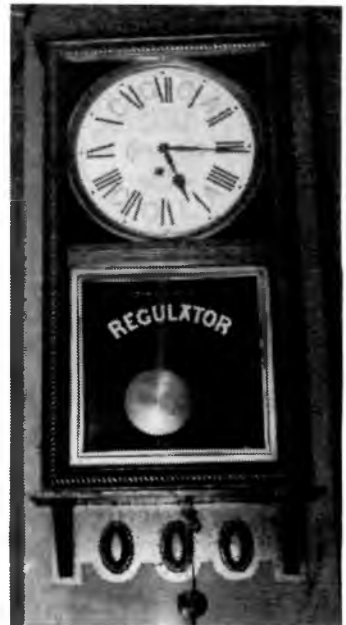
3. Carefully airbrushed nudie mags from the 30's (such naughty men!).

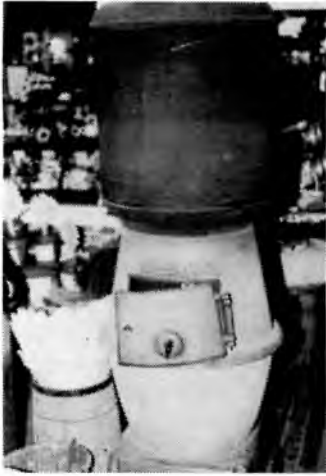
4. Every insurance policy, utility/telephone bill, invoice, trade journal, bill of sale, etc. since FOREVER.



5. Whiskey bottles stashed here and there. Empty and not. The boys tipped a bit, and probably during store hours!

- d. Clock over the old desk: 1910 Ingraham 35" time-only wall clock restored/cleaned and now wound regularly; a Coca-Cola advertiser model and a valuable addition to the store. Keeps great time, if I do say so myself. But then I'm the one who restored it ...





- e. Coal-burning stove, still used in the winter with donated fuel. If a volunteer can light the thing and keep it going, he/she has arrived!

f. Muscle-powered elevator, still utile, although repairs were necessary this spring after inadvertent damage by another organization. I won't go near the thing, myself.



- g. Parcels wrapped in brown paper and tied with string. Another popular tradition we still observe, at customer request.



1. Requires derring-do to replace the roll of string used to tie packages. A balancing act on the high, wobbly ladder just to reach the holder on the ceiling, then to thread the end through a series of screw eyes and down to the brown paper roll had customers holding their collective breath. Me, too. (Been there, done that.)



2. The day we wrapped a garden rake as a surprise gift. It left looking like a baby elephant. Volunteers can be as creative as anything. Then there was the time we sold 3 washtubs for an old-timey Baptist foot-washing, and let's not forget the thunder jug episode, shall we? I hesitate to describe the details of that sale; suffice to say the customer was lucid, completely serious and very graphic about her requirements. Luckily, we had a suitable item in stock. And made a customer for life.
- h. Newer volunteers often ask "Do we have a nail to put up a new display? Do we have a hammer?" Are we a hardware store? We, *of course* we do ... we just forget it from time to time.
- i. 1907 NCR Cash Register:
1. Requires upper body strength and the need to hold your mouth just right, and twiddle the mechanism just so for the crank to turn, the bell to ring, and the proper drawer to open. Sometimes the thing swallows unanchored bills and checks. They have to be fished out from the back of the machine. Not an easy operation.



2. There is no drawer C ... How come? They run A-B-D-E. Haven't been able to get a knowledgeable answer from anybody, and we still don't know.
3. Marble plate (if a dropped coin rang clear and true, it was silver and therefore good, if it thudded dully, it was a lead slug and therefore counterfeit).

4. Unused drawers chock-a-block with interesting things like a 1946 car sales receipt showing as a trade-in a '25 Model T, broken glasses, stray keys, chestnuts, a lace from John's shoe.



- j. The tale of Lynn's ailing maple tree (dragging 3 connected hoses from the sink back in the office through the store and out the front doors for watering). No ready access to water for either the tree or the front planter makes keeping green things alive a true challenge. Lynn's been up to that challenge so far, but I suspect the City may step in at any time and remove the offender. And also the brickwork to give whatever's there some room to thrive. Lynn Jones is bound and determined to keep the existing tree alive. (As are we all.)
- k. 1918 Huntsville High School graduating class photo: (Featuring John Harrison) Older customers come in, casually examine the photo, then recognition dawns, and they exclaim, "Why, there's *Mother!*" This has happened more than once. I love it!



Other Stuff:

1. After 5 years of volunteering, I finally realized (in an idle moment) that what I had assumed to be simple display window sashes were in fact sliding framed glass covers for the lower hardware display shelves, nailed up out of the way.

2. The mysterious old paper bag tied shut and hung from the shelves 9 feet overhead (next to the 1945 car tag) is full of dirty rags. Nothing else. Somehow that was felt worth keeping.



3. The drawer stuffed with bits and ends of unused brown paper tape we found during initial inventory 10 years ago (used to seal boxes in the old days). No one piece big enough for diddly, but apparently all too good to throw away.



4. Nails by the pounds at the old price ... *still* one of Huntsville's best-kept secrets!

5. One of my own early Huntsville memories is of coming into the store as a 10-year-

old with Dad to buy nails, and getting to watch John shave in the rear view mirror attached to the scale near the cash register.



6. The old safe still locks, and we know the combination, and we also know (once the combination's been dialed in) the exact spot to smack the door with a hammer to get the tumblers to fall.

7. There's an envelope full of old, well-filled teeth in one of the display cases ... probably Daniel's. There are a number of old dental bills for him upstairs; not so many for John.



8. Rumor has it that on cold winter days, when business was slow, the brothers would actually put chairs on top of the counter, and sit there enjoying the blast of hot air from the ceiling heater.

Accomplishments:

While it is not widely known, the store is financially independent of the Foundation. And NO, we are NOT owned and operated by the City of Huntsville. Lots of customers seem to assume that's so. We've managed to turn a modest profit most years; however, 1993 was an exception. While our financial loss was bad (we accepted it as a result of concerted effort to move old merchandise), it may have served to reinforce the Foundation's non-profit status, and that's good. What follows

is a recap of some things the Foundation has accomplished since taking over the store 10 years ago, as well as plans for the future.

1. Ceiling fans were installed on both sides of the store, avoiding (yet retaining) the old gas jets. Customers and volunteers who assume they were there from the start are wrong. (This was an immediate improvement accomplished by an early Management Committee).

2. The warehouse in the cellar was established to support folks restoring old homes in Twickenham or Old Town (or an old home anywhere in Madison County, for that matter). Exactly how this was done is unknown to me, but the Foundation must have been the driving force.



3. Replaced the existing roof with a copper equivalent (1987). This was a major monetary investment and it was accomplished in keeping with the style of the time. Over the years, the new roof has spring some elusive leaks that the roofers are still chasing. This is an on-going problem, but we hope to have the roof properly sealed before long.
4. Retired the mortgage and burned it at a special ceremony (1990). We used the old coal stove to do in the deed. (*See From the Editor for further information.*)
5. Improved the amenities in the office area to include a new sink, and added an area for a coffee maker and donated microwave, as well as a newer donated refrigerator. The 50's era Coke machine (6 oz. bottles) had to be replaced for canned products, yet drinks for volunteers are still only 35 cents.

6. Installed insurance-demanded items like smoke detectors, improved wiring, better locks, stairwell lighting, window guards, etc. We're working this year toward completion of planning and installation of an electronic security system, funds for which have been donated by the Gothic Guild.
7. Installed/incorporated display cases/stands (acquired from various sources, and most with historical significance in their own right) to augment visibility of new merchandise and highlight older goods to strengthen sales.
8. Installed a donated central air conditioner that cools the office and the loft. Those areas are a respite for hot, sweaty volunteers and the management team as well. We're also using a 30's era washing machine as the core of window dressing on the hardware side.
9. This summer we made a superb 30-second TV commercial with Comcast Cable's support. It's got 72 plays on 5 (our choice) cable channels during August. This was the first time Harrison's has been on the air in a solicitous way. We will do a similar ad for the '94 Christmas season. That commercial's been a real identifier for us and (we feel) a terrific investment of available funds.
10. The inventory is fully computerized, as well as all major bookkeeping operations. We've even added one of those fancy electronic charge card reader/printers. Wow!
11. Early this summer someone took down and burned the U.S. flag we've flown for years on major holidays, and which this time we'd put out to mark the passing of former President Nixon. The flag burning was incorrigible, stupid, and indefensible. Newspaper articles at the time pointed out that the flag was of commercial and historic significance, and already a store supporter has donated another flag of similar importance to take its place. We intend to be extremely careful with this one.

Long-range plans:

- 1994 – Installation of security system
- 1995 – Redo the bathroom facilities
- 1996 – Stabilize/restore the existing floors and plaster
(This may include repairing water damage from many years of neglect on the upper floors.)
- 1997 – Install a sprinkler system
- 1998 – Install adequate roof insulation (there is none now).
- ???? – Bring some order out of magnificent disorder.



EastBrook Springs Resort Restores Huntsville Landmarks

by
George Harsh

"Home of Famous Green Water and Dr. Herbert Harsh, COME! DRINK! BE WELL!"—so reads the sign that once pointed the way to the EastBrook Springs Hotel. Dr. Harsh was my grandfather and a medical doctor who never practiced medicine after he returned to Nashville, Tennessee, from Indian Territory, Oklahoma, around the turn of the century. He had gone there with a brother and cousin to “seek his fortune,” but he returned about 4 years later in ill health and with no fortune—in fact, with no funds at all. Despite this, he seemed to live fairly well while experiencing numerous losing business ventures—a broom factory, a feed and grain store, a phosphate mine, and the “skateboard” (50 years ahead of its time) distributorship for the southeastern United States. In recent years, my Aunt told me that her father simply borrowed money for all of these ventures.

In the 1920's, Dr. Harsh purchased the EastBrook Springs Resort near Estill Springs, Tennessee. As I understand it, from the late 1800's to about 1920, there were several springs (hotel resorts/spas) in that area and people from the lowlands of Mississippi, Louisiana, etc. would travel there by rail during the summer to escape the mosquitoes. In addition, some of the locals from Estill Springs recall northern “bigwigs” coming down south to EastBrook. The automobile essentially put these resorts out of business as people could easily travel to higher elevations such as Sewanee, Tennessee, or the Great Smoky Mountains.

My grandfather operated EastBrook as a camp for boys and girls in the late 1920's and early 1930's; however, this also was a losing venture with few customers and the camp



EastBrook Springs Resort in its original condition.

EastBrook Springs Hotel, December 1985.

From an article in The Herald-Chronicle, Winchester, TN.



Welcome to EastBrook Hotel — March 1971.

folded after 2 or 3 summers. The camp “staff” consisted of his young nieces and nephews from the Chitty family in Jacksonville, Florida. In later years they recalled having a great time as cleanup required less than an hour each day and the rest of their time was spent swimming, horseback riding, and so forth. To this day, Arthur Ben Chitty remains in the area as Historiographer for the University of The South at Sewanee. The last occupancy of the hotel was during World War II when Camp Forrest near Tullahoma, Tennessee, overflowed and some of the soldiers and their spouses spent a winter there.

The EastBrook Springs Resort on the Elk River had some unique features. A Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway 1909 Summer Resorts Brochure states, “EastBrook is charmingly situated among the foothills of the Cumberland Mountains, in the very midst of the “Spring region” for which this range has long been noted,” and that “the celebrated EastBrook Springs “Green Water” has a long established national reputation for its great virtue in all diseases of the stomach, bowels, liver and kidneys ... and quickly eradicates from the system all malarial poisons.” The Hotel itself was a two story building with about 30 rooms, connected to it by a breezeway was the large dining hall/kitchen. There was a cottage row and a two-story dormitory/dance hall. In the ravine behind the dining hall was the East Brook, where old Indian lore says it’s good luck and

*Mary Kathryn
Harsh in front of
the Dance Hall at
EastBrook Hotel,
January 1980.*



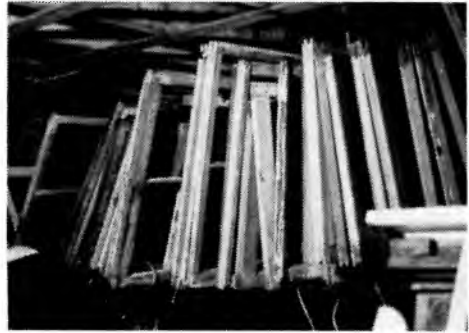
will cure any disease to take a bath in a brook flowing to the east. Next to the brook was the sulfur spring from which my grandfather bottled the water and sold his “famous green water” up North. The brook also fed a large swimming pool until it was destroyed by a gully-washer. Lawn tennis, horse-back riding, fishing, boating, and a double ten pin alley were available for recreation. The chemical analysis of the “famous green water” by Professor N. L. Lupton, State Chemist of Alabama, was posted in the dining hall on a wooden placard that remains in our family.

ANALYSIS OF FAMOUS GREEN WATER	
	GRAINS
Sodium Carbonate.	8.970
Lithium Carbonate.	0.066
Calcium Carbonate.	6.617
Magnesium Carbonate.	3.775
Sodium Phosphate.	0.104
Sodium Disulphide.	12.346
Sodium Chloride.	5.837
Sodium Sulphate.	7.763
Potassium Sulphate.	2.592
Alumina.	0.408
Silica.	0.137
Iodine, trace.	
Sodium Bromide, trace.	
Total solids to gallon.	48.614
Sulphurated Hydrogen Gas (cu. in.)	3.66

My first remembrance of EastBrook is from the late 1940’s when my family would drive down from Nashville each July 4th weekend to visit my grandmother who spent the summer in one of the cottages. My sisters and I would play in the empty hotel—racing through the hallways and rooms. Each room had a night stand, iron bed frame, and a dresser complete with wig cabinet and mirror. The wash basins and pitchers in each room and anything else easily carried had long since disappeared. Many of the dressers contained a mouse’s nest, and my Dad used to say that whenever some

mouse brings in a match, the whole place would burn down. The foundations and roofs were kept in good repair by my grandmother and the “caretaker” who appeared in 1941; otherwise the buildings would have probably fallen in during the 1960’s.

With the death (in the early 1970’s) of EastBrook’s “caretaker”, who had guarded the premises like they were his own, it became obvious that vandals would soon destroy or cart off everything. Within months, the large curved front desk was gone and most of the windows were broken. By this time my wife, Eleanor, and I were members of Historic Huntsville Foundation, had met Ralph Allen of the Foundation’s Board of Directors. My sisters and family, who now owned EastBrook, decided to start donating parts of the buildings to the Foundation Warehouse for use in restoration in Huntsville.



*Windows, etc.
stored in the
basement of Harrison Brothers.*

The Warehouse provides a storage and sales area for items that are available at a decent price to those who are restoring structures in Huntsville. The Foundation’s first Warehouse was in an empty building off Washington Street, downtown. When this unlocked building became unsatisfactory, a small space behind Jones and Herrin Architects was utilized until the Foundation purchased Harrison Brothers Hardware on the square. At that point, the Warehouse moved into Harrison Brothers basement and upper floors. It is operated by “Warehouse Volunteers” and is open on a limited basis—usually the first and third Saturdays of each month.

The first salvage operation to EastBrook in the 1970's consisted of Ralph Allen and myself in his pickup truck. We removed what remained of the hand-blown glass from the windows and it now resides in the Alabama Constitution Village. Ralph and I would make two trips per year—early spring and late fall—loading his pickup with doors, door frames, window frames, baseboard, trim, flooring, porch railing, beaded pine siding from the interior and poplar siding from the exterior. The crew soon expanded—on one trip we had 5 pickups and 13 workers. Some were removing items for use in their own homes; however, it always amazed me how many would show up just to enjoy the company, have a good time, and contribute by dismantling the old buildings for use in restoring homes in Huntsville. Even though thoroughly enjoyable, it was always a long, hard day with a couple of coffee breaks and one lunch break. Once, after spending all day removing the dance hall flooring, I was so dirty and grubby looking that when Eleanor and I stopped on the way home at a fast food outlet, they would not take my order until I first paid!

The majority of EastBrook items are in homes about the same age as EastBrook on Walker, Holmes, Randolph, and Clinton Avenues, and Steele and Smith Street in the Old Town Historic District. While the porch railings, columns, and poplar siding are easily seen from the outside, to really





Columns and railings from the Dance Hall were used in restoring this old home and the one on the previous page. Here the front doors are the ones that were on the hotel.

appreciate how EastBrook has been put to use by “Old Town Craftsmen,” one needs to look inside, especially at the pine flooring and beaded pine siding. The pine siding was essentially in a natural state (no finish) and has been used in several kitchens, bathrooms, and living rooms with a clear finish that is striking. (See photo next page.)



Here is a door from the hotel. The whole frame, including the top windows, are from EastBrook. The door is 4-paneled (the bottom 2 panels cannot be seen). This type of door is no longer made and thus, greatly increased this home's value. These people split the doors so that they bend to provide more space in the bathroom.

At the Railroad Depot, all of the window and door frames in the two wood frame buildings are from East

An example of some of the paneling from inside the hotel used in restoring a bath-

room of an historic home. Notice the difference between this picture and the one of the front desk.



Brook. In the Twickenham Historic District, some of the dance hall porch columns, beaded pine siding and pine flooring are on Eustis, and the Weeden House has a board door. Doors and door locks are on Franklin, bulls eyes (door corner trim) on Locust, and one of the hotel's more classical elements, a palladian window, now resides on White Street.

Today, EastBrook "stands" as a stark reminder of days and memories from days gone by and somewhat of present day neglect. The dining hall has collapsed; the hotel is essentially a skeleton of exposed beams, floor joists, etc.; the dance hall stands without its porch and dance floor, but with some siding, two of the three cottages remain; Tims Ford reservoir now covers the brook and the sulfur spring; and the grounds are overgrown with weeds, trees and bushes. However, we feel fortunate that some mouse did not bring in a match years ago, that the campfire on the front porch from the "motorcycle gang" did not destroy it, and that we were able to donate much of it. We are especially indebted to Ralph Allen, the Historic Huntsville Foundation, the Foundation's Warehouse, and all the many people who helped "move" EastBrook to Huntsville. So the old Hotel is not dead—it lives again as it has helped, and continues to help, restore many Huntsville landmarks.



Window and door frames — at the Railroad Depot.

*RIGHT AND BELOW:
The home of Joe &
Carolyn Harris,
122 Walker*



*Palladian window
from the home of
Kyle Johnson,
313 White Street.*



*Bulls eye from a home on
Locust Street.*

*Interesting use of
wall paneling
from inside the
EastBrook Hotel.
Tony Daily,
119 Walker.*



**(Pictures for this
article were pro-
vided by Toney
Daly and M. K.
Harsh Beaty.)**



Ms. H. Harsh, Dietitian, Secretary and Treasurer

"OUR SONG"

*It will all be sun in the long run,
Open the door of your heart.*

*Take in the best, shut out the rest:
It will pay in every way.*

*Merry as a bird, busy as a bee,
With sunshine in your heart:*

*Makes you gay and lights the way
For a bright and happy day.*

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Dr. H. Harsh, Owner and Business Manager



*315 White
Street circa
1910 or
1920.*

*RIGHT: Front of
house in 1975.*



*BELOW: Front of
house in 1994.*



315 WHITE STREET

by

Nancy M. Munson

In 1893, James B. and Daniel T. Harrison purchased the lot at 315 White Street for \$400. The brothers were new tobacco and hardware merchants in Huntsville, having first established Harrison Brothers in Smithville, Tennessee, in 1879. Brother James had visited Huntsville on buying trips from Smithville and selected the town for their new home. Daniel and James were accompanied on the move by their sister, Cora, who had kept the store's books in Smithville and by their youngest brother, Robert.

James B. Harrison and his wife Sallie (Sarah) Holmes (a Smithville native) took title to the lot soon after marrying and in 1893 built the house which presently stands at 315 White Street. At the same time, James and his brother Daniel built an almost identical house further up the hill at 403 White Street. A newspaper account in the August 23, 1893 *Huntsville Democrat* mentions "Two handsome residences in course of erection on White Street opposite Mr. Frank Fickling's house [400 White Street] which are, we understand, the property of Mr. Harrison." The plans for this pair of houses had been published in a plan book or in some other form; however, the source has yet to be found.

In 1920, the widowed Mrs. James B. Harrison sold 315 White Street to another widow, Mrs. Lucy Frances Norris. Mrs. Norris lived in the house and rented out apartments for nearly fifty years until my husband, Bill, and I purchased it from the Norris family in 1975.

When Bill and I and our two daughters, Sibyl (10) and Katharine (8) moved into the house in 1975, we were fortunate to have the last Harrison brothers as our neighbors. Daniel T. and Cora Harrison had never married, but the youngest brother, Robert S., had three children: Daniel F.

(who married Lucille Coons), John W. (who married Carroll Drake) and Mary Margaret (who married Earl Smallwood). Daniel F. and his wife Lucille lived at 401 White Street (built by Daniel's father, Robert S.) and John W. Harrison, by this time a widower, lived at 405 White Street (built by Daniel T. Harrison).

Daniel and John were true gentlemen in the old fashioned manner. They were unfailingly courteous and gentle and did their best to make us newcomers feel welcome. When we special ordered our old drip coffee pot from Harrison Brothers it was delivered personally to our door once received by the store. Naturally, everything was wrapped in brown paper and neatly tied with white string. When Daniel found out that Bill and I were interested in local history and traditions, he brought down a big bag full of tender poke weed shoots and told me how to make poke salad. I must admit, the leaves wilted before I could work up enough enthusiasm to attempt the project.

Sibyl and Katharine used to make Easter baskets for the Harrisons and always enjoyed their company. In 1983, when Sibyl was in high school, she interviewed John Harrison for a school project. This taped interview became a valuable source of oral history as John passed away the following year. In the interview, John told how his "Uncle Jim" (James B.) was the first to build on the Harrison family lots on White Street, which at the time comprised the entire east side of the street between the present California Street and Eustis Avenue. Mr. Harrison recalled White Street around 1910:

We mostly walked. Of course we had horses and buggies—and bicycles. White Street was just loose limestone rock. And when you rode a bicycle [on it], it just didn't turn out. And too, I never saw it burn but there was a gas post right there, gas light, right at the corner of what's White Street and White Circle. I guess the electricity was out there, I guess about 1906 or 1907.

Of the municipal services, John remembered:

The city had a one-half inch water line [and] for some reason they never covered it—just left it exposed ... at the side of the street. In the winter it would burst and my father and Uncle Jim would go out and patch it.

He said that everyone just walked downtown to do their shopping because “it was the only place to go.” This tradition continued well past World War II when everything anyone needed was available downtown: hardware from Harrison Brothers; clothing from T. T. Terry’s, Dunavant’s, and various specialty stores; medicine and treats from Tom Dark Drugs; groceries for the A&P on Eustis Ave.; furniture at Sterchi’s; and banking, library facilities, hotel/restaurants, movies, etc.

Mrs. Lucy Frances Norris purchased the house in 1920, from Sallie Harrison whose husband had died of the flu. The original title is in Mrs. Norris’ name because she was widowed the year she moved from New Market, Alabama to Huntsville. Since this was before the days of Social Security, Mrs. Norris made her living by dividing the house into four apartments and renting out three of the four. When Huntsville boomed during and after World War II, the influx of newcomers left few places for them to live. Our house, like many other big, old, downtown houses, gave new arrivals a first home in the growing city and provided a livelihood for its widowed owner.

Lucy Frances Norris was born in 1875. She died at age 103, in 1978. She owned 315 White Street from 1920 - 1975.

Precise information on what life was like at 315 White Street is scarce for the years



1920-1940. It is known, however, that the house was heated with the six coal fireplaces. Mr. Frank Woodard, Mrs. Norris' grandson, remembers that the fireplaces were still in use in the mid-1940's when he was a child living in the house with his parents. To supplement the fireplace heat, Mrs. Norris had a small coal "heater" in the kitchen which was vented into the flue of the dining room fireplace. Mr. Woodard recalls that his mother and grandmother baking potatoes in a small oven located inside the flue. Before the coal "heater" and a newer gas stove were added to the house, a large kitchen range most likely provided for cooking and for heating the surrounding area.

Bertha Woodard, Mrs. Norris' daughter, on the front steps of 315 White Street. She gave us this picture years ago so that we could see what the steps and posts looked like for restoration purposes.



Coal for cooking and heating was stored behind the house. A three-part out-building located in the back yard served as a coal shed, smoke house, and tool shed. There were three doors in a row on the long side to the left. The shed speaks eloquently of daily needs or problems and how they might be solved.

1938, Frank Woodard is swinging. In the background is the back porch.



Mrs. Norris was a strong-willed and self-reliant woman. She was also a practical perfectionist who advised one of her tenants never to let anyone else wash her good dishes. Mrs. Norris enjoyed the company of and became good friends with some of her female boarders.

In 1952-53, when they first married and moved to Huntsville, Jack and Billie Grosser lived in an upstairs apartment. By then, gas space heaters placed in each room struggled to heat the drafty, chilly house. Billie remembers wearing a bathrobe and catching the hem on fire trying to stay warm by backing up to the lone heater in their room. The Grossers' apartment was furnished when they rented it, but sparsely so. When their Aunt Thelma visited the newlyweds, she went directly to Sterchi's and bought some furniture on the condition that the store deliver it on the spot. Sterchi's was closing by then, but agreed to the terms and the Grossers got some much-needed chairs and tables.

Billie says that shortly thereafter, she obtained employment at the Huntsville Electrical System (a forerunner of Huntsville Utilities). There she joined an office of about five women whose responsibilities included taking payments from customers. Billie remembers the more colorful of their customers around power bill payment time. Dr. Burritt's checks were always recognizable when they arrived because he would place the stamp directly on the check, omitting an envelope. When payment was sent in an envelope, some arrived addressed simply to "Blood Suckers" and the street number. Fortunately for the Grossers, they were able to find more suitable quarters and moved before the hot weather of summer arrived to make the upstairs apartment truly undesirable.

Other tenants of Mrs. Norris in 1952-1953 included Marge Bledsoe and her mother, La Vina Stewart. Marge's father, Master Sgt. Eugene Stewart had come with his family from Fort Bliss, Texas, along with other military personnel connected with Werner Von Braun and the team of German rocket scientists. In 1952, however, Sargent Stewart was transferred to Germany and his family could no longer live "on post" at Redstone Arsenal. While Marge attended college

in Tuscaloosa, her mother resided at 315 White Street until her father could obtain housing for them in Germany (not an easy or automatic thing at the time). Mrs. Stewart lived in the downstairs apartment next to Mrs. Norris. Both women enjoyed each other's companionship, being separated from their families by geography and early widowhood. How nice this was for both.



Mrs. Norris, I am told, also found a "foster daughter" in Domi Yeskawich, the Asian bride of Korean War veteran Mike Yeskawich. Before the couple moved to Huntsville, Mrs. Norris had never known anyone from Asia and was not sure about having Domi and her husband as tenants. Domi's good nature and cooperativeness soon won over Mrs. Norris, however. The two became fast friends and Domi earned a place as one of Mrs. Norris' favorite tenants.

*Domi Yeskawich and daughter Florence
in front of downstairs fireplace.*

Mrs. Norris also loved to garden; more precisely, to raise flowers. Joyce Edgar whose parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Sullivan, moved next door in 1944, remembers helping her in the garden. The whole of the back yard, from the house to the back fence was all flowers. Amy Hatley, Mrs. Norris' granddaughter also says, "Grand-mother continued to maintain meticulously planned gardens at the back of the house. These were glorious and quite the envy of the Twickenham community."



*Joyce Edgar,
age 10, in 1947.*

As was the custom of the day, Mrs. Norris completed her domestic responsibilities by early afternoon. Then, freshly clothed in an afternoon dress, she was ready to read or to work on her tatting, or to entertain visitors who stopped in. I heard from more than one person that everyone who stopped for afternoon tea with Mrs. Norris, said she always wore white gloves. Later I learned that perhaps a part of Mrs. Norris' reliance on white gloves was to conceal her fingernails which were stained from gardening and which stubbornly resisted cleaning. I guess I follow in Mrs. Norris' footsteps as far as loving to grow things is concerned, and I can identify with her frustration over futile nail scrubbing. (I have just heard that one dedicated British horticulturist loads up under his fingernails with soap before going into the garden. I think I'll try that. I wish I could pass along the suggestion to Lucy Frances.) Mrs. Norris sold bouquets at \$1 apiece, I am told, and donated all the proceeds to the First Baptist Church. She also prized the large pecan tree in the backyard (which still stands) for its small but delectable nuts.

Before the holidays, she shelled and sold these. The profits were also donated to the church. We love this tree too, and agree that the nuts are especially tasty.

Large, old pecan tree with old, perhaps original, one-car garage. Bill rebuilt the doors in 1993.



By the time my husband and I bought the house in 1975, it had been closed up for about six years. This period of disuse took its inevitable toll, allowing plenty of grime, dirt, and mildew to accumulate on most wooden surfaces, warping some floor boards and cracking lots of plumbing fixtures and pipes. When Bill looked at the house before buying it, the real estate agent turned the water on, and a pipe burst above a downstairs ceiling. All the plaster and lots of water cascaded down while Bill ran to a neighbor for a wrench.

On the day in June, 1975, when I first crossed the threshold of 315 White Street, family in tow, I had never seen the house before. While Bill was buying the house, the girls and I had stayed behind in California. The children needed to finish the school year and I had to sell our house and deal with the innumerable details of moving. Bill had sent me pictures of our new home, but the reality of four kitchens with not one workable sink (a legacy of old, unused apartments), bare bulbs dangling on wires from the ceilings, and the dank, musty interior came as a real shock. After I suppressed my initial urge to run away, however, I began to see what had prompted Bill to buy the house. High ceilings (11' 4") and large windows (two panes over two) filled the house with light and air once the old drapes and Venetian blinds were pulled aside. The floor plan was a charming assemblage of



rooms of all shapes and sizes delightfully put together with little regard for symmetry, but with a subtle and charming balance all its own.

Downstairs kitchen with white paint, bare bulb, and space heater in 1975.

The house is a two-story frame Victorian with wrap-around porch and modest gingerbread and spindlework. The woodwork is heart pine throughout that had originally, we believe, been grained. The floors are heart pine, although three rooms downstairs plus the foyer had been "Modernized" by being covered with narrow oak flooring. Three chimneys and six fireplaces (three downstairs and three up) originally provided heat in the winter. The fireboxes are narrow and designed to burn coal. The mantels throughout are golden oak, two of which had over-mantels which were mirrored, turned and ornamented with applied carvings. The living room fireplace has heavy twisted columns that reach the floor, a spindle gallery at the top of the overmantle and original decorative ceramic tiles surround the firebox and cast iron cover. Throughout the house, transoms distribute light and air and the moldings are wide and fluted with bull's eyes at the upper corners of windows and doors.

The original oak living room fireplace with its decorative ceramic tile, cast iron cover, and beveled glass mirrors.



The two front doors have glass in the top half. Heavy coffered oak panels make up the bottom half of the main door while the other front door at the far end of the wrap-around porch is pine with ornamental carvings and lighter proportions. When we arrived in 1975, both doors were fitted with lovely, large Victorian screen doors. When the front two doors and the back door were opened, the house was extremely well ventilated. We have kept the screen doors but no longer use them. By just opening windows in the

spring and fall, there is delightful cross-ventilation in the house.

*These screen doors might be original.
They were here in 1975.*

As we began renovation, our first efforts went into the kitchen and bathrooms. We wanted to use the original kitchen as our kitchen, which meant getting rid of the three extra ones. Fortunately, no basic structural changes had been made in our house. To eliminate one kitchen, we simply removed cabinets that had been installed at one side of what had originally been the dining room. We knew that this room had been the dining room because of a built-in corner china cabinet with a charming back door access from the kitchen. No other structural change was necessary except to repair the ceiling collapse due to the water from the broken pipe.

*The china closet with door to
the kitchen at right. The cabinet
has a back door entry from the
kitchen.*



Eliminating the two upstairs kitchens was a little more strenuous. At some time in its history (probably before 1920), our house had a chimney fire which resulted in the roof being burned. When the roof was replaced, the roof line was altered and two back rooms added to the upstairs. These had been used as kitchens by Mrs. Norris, but became a large bathroom

and a bedroom for us. To make the change, we carted out old rickety cabinets and had to cover the cheap pine floors with carpeting. In both rooms we chose to sheetrock over poor quality, narrow, beaded board siding and added a much-needed linen closet to the bathroom.

In creating our new kitchen, we tried to preserve as much as possible of what had been in the old one. The floor was covered with asbestos tile that had been securely installed over well-glued-down black felt paper. The room was paneled in wide beaded board siding and had the original heart pine floor. Unfortunately, the walls were under many coats of old



white enamel (Mrs. Norris used to paint every spring) that dripped over the beaded edges. While the electricians, plumbers and heating contractors were working to rewire, plumb, and install the central heating, I was on a ladder applying Strypeze to the walls. I never forgot those 11'4" ceiling heights as I waited and scraped. Over and over again.

Kitchen walls are beaded board. Open shelves hold cooking utensils.

The house had few kitchen cabinets so we installed open upper shelves, left the wood natural, and refinished a Hoosier cabinet that had been Mrs. Norris'. We had lower cabinets built to resemble the beaded board of the walls and sanded the floor to expose the beautiful pine, once we scraped off the asbestos tile. We finished the hardwood floors with three coats of satin gloss polyurethane. This has proved very durable, although after nineteen years, two floors need refurbishing. The kitchen has a nice pantry which provides adequate storage for groceries and large utensils.

During this long process, Bill and I became amazingly adept at using a drum sander and edger. In fact, one of the most flattering accolades I received as a workperson was from Mr. James Dean, the plumbing contractor (not the actor). He said that I worked harder than his men and that he would hire me if I wanted a job.

While I struggled to strip the kitchen walls and Bill taught summer school, Mrs. Corrine Sullivan, our neighbor, was a godsend. When I was too tired to move and flopped down under the pecan tree, she used to bring me iced tea and a congealed salad. There were many times when she brought cold lemonade to Bill and me before we had any refrigeration—or a kitchen for that matter.

After the kitchen, we turned our attention to bathrooms. The house may have had indoor plumbing from the beginning; when we arrived there was a small upstairs bathroom with a clawfoot tub, wall-hung sink and commode that said “push” on the flush lever. We brought all these fixtures downstairs and installed them in a small bathroom that had been added on the north side of the house. (This bathroom had previously been filled with modern fixtures which were broken.) In the upstairs bathroom, we installed a pedestal sink and commode and now use it as a half-bath. Our major bathroom is the ex-kitchen adjacent to it.



The downstairs bathroom holds all the original fixtures salvaged from the upstairs bathroom: a clawfoot tub, wall-hung sink, and commode.

Throughout the house (with the exception of the kitchen and the two new additions upstairs), the walls are lath and plaster. No walls or ceilings were ever

painted. All were papered: the ceilings with "ceiling" paper in a vague cloudy or shadowy pattern and the walls with a damask-type pattern or an Adam-style scroll and urn pattern. We papered all the downstairs rooms except the living room and the kitchen, and painted upstairs except for the central hall off the main staircase and foyer, which we papered as it had been.

We believe that the original lighting fixtures in the house were electric. Two of these were of a peculiar finish: a sort of dark, spotted copper was applied over solid brass. We had both stripped to the brass and lacquered. They now hang in the dining room (originally one of twin parlors) and the living room (the original front parlor). A simple brass ceiling fixture with a cone shaped globe (see photo of foyer as it was when



we bought the house) originally hung in the foyer. We refinished it and it now hangs upstairs at the head of the stairs. We were fortunate to find excellent sources for old ceiling fixtures in the area and have replaced our bare bulbs in this way.

*Dining room
chandelier.*

Heavy pocket doors originally separated the twin parlors. These were removed at some point and replaced with glass French doors. We are sorry to lose these original doors but we like the lightness of the glass transom and French doors.

While we know a good bit about the original state of the house, there are still areas of uncertainty. We do not know what sorts of curtains or draperies were originally used. This was a simple, comfortable, middle class household in a small town, so we have kept window treatments light and simple with half-shutters or muslin curtains with fringe.

As far as the woodwork is concerned, we have chosen to paint it cream in most rooms. It was difficult to distinguish between layers of paint when scraping and sanding, but we believe the woodwork was originally grained with brown or umber striations over a tan base. We stripped the mantels and they remain that way at present. Faux finishing might be an interesting future project.

We love the big windows with old glass that makes things ripple when you change your vantage point. We did a lot of restringing of window weights which in some cases we had to retrieve from their pockets. Bill and I re-puttied many windows and repaired many cross mullions. Windows were a major project with each room we restored. The windows all had to be removed, the glass taken out, reglazed, the weights restrung, window stop molding replaced and all rehung. Window sills were a nasty strip and scrape job. We used chemical strippers and very sharp blades and sandpaper. We did not try heat guns, which may be a good idea. Bill would have our collection of scraper blades resharpened frequently.

Over the years we continue to enjoy working on and learning about the house. We are developing new gardens where Mrs. Norris' old ones were. Old bulbs remain which once were hers, and we too enjoy adding our lives to the history of 315 White Street.

We built an arbor and fenced herb garden in the spring of 1994. My husband built the high, board fence to replace the cedar posts and wire fence which was there in the 1970's.





ABOVE: The back yard, looking toward the house in 1975.

BELOW: The original roofs and posts of the back porch were retained, but lattice was added for summer comfort.





LEFT:
A corner of
the lattice-
enclosed back
porch, 1994.

BELOW:
Mother robin
with babies in
the nest in our
gingerbread,
1994

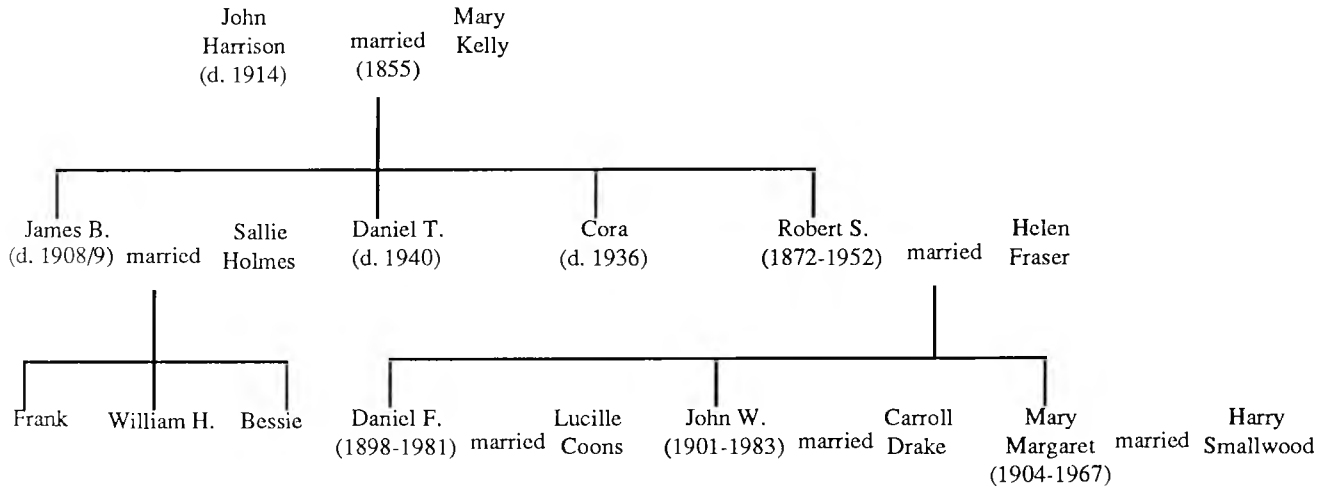




The foyer and stairs leading to second floor in 1975.

Harrison Brothers
- abbreviated genealogical chart -

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Harrison Brothers, 1908



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1995 ENGAGEMENT CALENDAR



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National Trust for Historic Preservation
1995 Engagement Calendar

\$12.95 wiro-bound and boxed

54 beautiful full-color photographs
(including our own Harrison Brothers Hardware Store)

112 page week-at-a-glance format

Perfect Christmas stocking-stuffer!

America Restored
Published by The Preservation Press of the
National Trust for Historic Preservation

\$53.50 "coffee table" edition

319 full-color pages

(including our own Harrison Brothers Hardware Store)

Represents the best restoration projects. Photographer Carol Highsmith captured a wide-ranging array of restorations from houses to covered bridges, to ships and theaters, and even a battleship.

Author Ted Landphair tells a moving and informative story, capturing the human drama surrounding the restoration of these landmarks..

HELP WANTED

Sales

WANTED: General sales positions available, 4 hour shifts, once a month or more often. Receive a 10 - 20% discount on items purchased at the store, attend a Christmas get-together and volunteer appreciation picnic. No experience necessary, learn at your own pace. It helps if you like to meet new and interesting people. It wouldn't hurt if you have a screw loose. Apply in person or by phone to Harrison Brothers Hardware Store. Come be a part of history!

**"If you think low pay is bad,
try no pay."**

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_____	<p><i>Historic America</i> The National Trust's <i>Historic America 1995 Engagement Calendar</i>. Full-color images from <i>America Restored</i> representing the gamut of restoration projects.</p>	12.95

(Please Include \$2.00 for Postage and Handling)

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 P.O. Box 786
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Huntsville Project. Please call me.

The HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION was established in 1974 to encourage the preservation of historically or architecturally significant sites and structures throughout Huntsville and Madison County and to increase public awareness of their value to the community. The FOUNDATION is the only organization in Huntsville concerned exclusively with architectural preservation and history. Membership is open to interested and concerned citizens from across north Alabama and beyond.



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