

Three Dollars

Fall 1995

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY
Of Local Architecture & Preservation



Stained Glass Windows & Doors to Nowhere

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Founded 1974

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Front cover "Ladies Window" done by Frances Rahn Campbell and Wayne Lumpkin.

**THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY**
of Local Architecture and Preservation

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From the Chair:

Dear Foundation Members:

The summer of 1995 will surely go down as one of the hottest recently recorded. But the heat did not deter the movers and shakers of HHF's annual fall fund-raiser. Our 7th annual Trade Day on the Square was blessed with perfect weather on September, as several thousand gathered to enjoy family-oriented entertainment, arts, crafts, and lots of good food. A big thank you goes to Trade Day co-chairs B. J. Robinson and Pat Ryan, and to all their committees for their tremendous efforts to bring this event to such a successful conclusion.

A highlight of Trade Day was the celebration of the return of the Little Lion to Big Spring Park. Many Huntsville/Madison County residents with fond memories of the Lion attended the celebration and a plaque was presented to the City commemorating the Lion's return. We were particularly happy to have Elizabeth Hummel Spencer and her family as our special guests at the celebration. Mrs. Spencer's grandfather, J. F. Hummel, was the one who first gave the Lion to the City of Huntsville.

Now fall is here with steam rising from creeks, crisp morning temperatures, and the brush of reds and golds on the trees. With fall comes the prospect of another activity-filled season for HHF. The first membership meeting of the 1995-1996 year will be held November 16 at First Presbyterian Church. We will begin with our usual potluck supper and then enjoy a presentation from Dr. George Marchelos on collecting antiques for 19th century homes. We hope each of you will plan to attend.

Your Board of Directors works diligently to achieve the Foundation goals of preservation, restoration, and education. But these tasks cannot be accomplished without the active involvement and support of the membership. Please call me at 830-9962 if you would like to serve as a volunteer at Harrison Brothers Hardware, as a member of a committee, or if you have any questions or suggestions. Remember: HHF is **your** organization.



From the Editor:

This fall issue of *The Quarterly* has come together in fits and starts. Wayne Lumpkin, Kyle Johnson, and Sandra and David Ely were faithful and prompt. Frances Roberts' *Sesquicentennial History* was at arm's reach. But ... what began as an excursion with Dot Johnson to "Old Salem," Tennessee, to take a photograph of her favorite federal-style house, resulted in a visit to Falls Mill, followed by an extraordinary "Letter to the Editor" from the miller, William Janey, and a subsequent re-visit to the area to verify and photograph a few things. Miller Janey is a font of information about a part of Tennessee that served as Huntsville's front door, the jumping-off place for Alabama settlement. John Hunt, the Beans, Larkins, Acklens, and dozens of Tennesseans now buried in our Maple Hill Cemetery or in scattered grave sites in Madison County, first came to Huntsville via the stage road at Salem on Bean's Creek.

So, an issue dedicated to windows and renovations turned out to be stained glass windows, attic additions, roads to Tennessee, and doors to nowhere.



Door to Nowhere ... more next issue.

June 8, 1995

William Janey
5 Falls Mill Road
Belvidere, Tennessee 37306
1-615-469-7849 (Home)
1-615-469-7161 (Mill)

Dear Elise H. Stephens,

Thank you for this opportunity to share what I can about Inns and Taverns. I have had this golden opportunity to listen to stories from the older folks who visit the mill, including some who have a keen sense of history.

I do a lot of custom grinding for people in the late fall and early winter. I hope some day I can write or help someone write about the experiences these folks had going to the many mills which no longer exist. I spent last summer on Duck River locating the many mills I have researched just on Duck River alone.

In Franklin County, Tennessee, I have researched at least fifty water mills which have operated at one time or another. Many older mills have been torn down for newer ones to be built on the same site.

I have read microfilm at the Tennessee State Library and Archives. Looking for information about mills sometimes led to other sources of information.

Adrian Gonsolin has helped me a lot. Especially on the topic of the old stage houses. He was the miller at the Boiling Fork Mill since 1937, a very close friend of mine.

Sara Moore, owner of the antebellum home where the owners of Falls Mill live, is about the age of ninety. She located us the Rocky Springs Stage Coach Inn we are restoring. She has a real keen sense of history, too.

Anyhow, in the early part of the last century many settlers, including David Crockett, came to this part of the country after the Cherokee Chief Double Head signed away the land here in the year 1806.

Long hunters, surveyors, and prospectors came into this region previously. Jesse Bean was the first permanent white settler who lived near a cave just over the hill from here. Indians took their toll on some Tacker children near the Bean homestead in 1812. I found their graves at the head of Larkin Creek near here.

David Crockett and his wife Polly got a family started here. Soon after he returned from the Battle of Tohopeaka in the Alabama territory, she took ill and died. Her grave is near the foot of the mountain. He soon married Elizabeth Patton near the Bean Creek community and moved to the head of Rattle Smoke Branch the other side of Old Salem. The place was marked by a well dug near a spring. I found a wrought iron horse shoe, without caulks, that could have belonged to David Crockett at his site.

Many settlers poured into Alabama from this region soon afterwards. Old Salem began to prosper very rapidly. With so many people passing through the area, stage houses began to prosper. I know the location of two right in Old Salem. A third one was there also. People confuse the old Simmons home as being one, but it was the home of an ancestor of Sara Moores'. She can tell an interesting story of her grandmother saving a Confederate officer from being shot by a Yankee patrol at the Simmons home.

A very old but intelligent lady by the name of Vanzant was born at the Rippling Water Plantation Stage Coach house up the creek from here. She said it was a very stately home. During a ball held there, an officer went into the bedroom and shot himself. When Mrs. Vanzant was a little girl and her parents had guests over, she had to sleep in her parents' bedroom. She would fret because of a blood stain under the bed.

The *Franklin County Historical Quarterly* has an interesting article of a Mrs. Cowan who ran the Old Salem Stage Coach Inn for years. It was located in front of the Jernigan Home. Bricks from the place partially filled a ditch. I discovered them putting up a Falls Mill sign there.

Listening to my grandfather, I learned about the many transition stations through the mountains. One such place was run off Petty Point. Andrew Jackson was supposed to have spent many a night there. Mr. Petty was in the Robertson Expedition at the Indian massacres of Nickajack. He is buried today behind this home. The house once belonged to a great-aunt and uncle of mine. I spent the night there on several occasions. A miller by the name of Bell lived there once, also. The Bell's mill site is near by there.

My great-aunt Hattie "Bell" Sanders was named for the Bell family. They had a reputation as being really nice people.

My grandfather knew of a black woman, a slave at the time, who witnessed Rosecran's massive army pass by the house for three days and nights, on the way to Chattanooga and their defeat at Chickamauga. She said they had the appearance of a large, blue worm from the mountain as she saw them approaching from the distance.

Many Confederates in previous times went off the mountain at the head of Sweeden's Cove. There was an Inn where horses were changed. This area was called Jump Off and is so to this day. But, the Inn was burned and later became known as the Burned Stand Inn.

My grandfather went to length talking about robberies, buried gold, etc. about the Burned Stand. I can't remember the details and would not wish to fabricate anything. I hope someday to locate this site. I know others who know.

Along the escarpments of the Cumberland Mountains were stations where one would have a team of hot-blooded horses to bring the stage up the mountain. Places like Petty Point, Breakfield Point, Turn Pike Spring, Coldwater Spring, Burn Stand, etc.

When I was fourteen or fifteen, I was floating the Elk River from Lockmiller Bridge to Mansford Bridge. Tims Ford Dam was proposed. I was with Adrian Gonsolin. We wanted to say good-bye forever to old Elk River. As we floated past Coperas Cave, I noticed some ancient pier timbers sticking through the shoals of the river. Adrian said that was one of many stations along the river where cotton was flat-boated downstream. I supposed flat-boats did tie off and stay at these stations during the night. One of the recent *Franklin County Historical Quarterly's* had some interesting stories about flat-boating on the Elk.

There was even supposed to be some stations on Beans Creek. Beans flowed from some rich agricultural farms and plantations. As I mentioned, Estill Springs, Winchester Springs, Keith Springs at Rowe Gap, etc. became mountain retreats and so called health spas of the antebellum period.

Winchester Springs was very popular. Union soldiers stayed there and sent an escort to invite the Bells of Mary Sharpe to a grand ball there.

Travelers Rest was a popular place in Sewanee. It is there today. Forest, Morgan and Rosecrans; Wheeler and Walker were some Union and Confederate generals who stayed there. Five Confederate generals are buried in the nearby University cemetery.

Beersheba on the escarpment of the mountain north of Sewanee has inns where some Confederate guerrilla generals spent their peaceful moments. One of these places is a Methodist seminary today.

Today there is the Assembly Grounds in Monteagle with the Adam Edgeworth Inn and a number of Victorian vintage homes, and an Episcopal Convalescence Center.

Sewanee also has St. Mary's Retreat. All these places have a good degree of history about them. Winchester had to Montmillers (?) or Saint Claire Inn that was notorious in its day. There was a famous duel there.

I can't remember if I stated earlier that between 1854–1874, there was a newspaper called the *Winchester Home Journal*. I used to read them on microfilm at the State Library and Archives in Nashville. There would be statesmen, etc. that would visit the county and stay at some fabulous inn. The antebellum period in Franklin County was a luxurious time if you were a free, wealthy individual. There were many resorts centering on springs or the mountain atmosphere. There also was the University of the South, Mary Sharpe, Clark Reading, Winchester Normal, etc. So education took center stage too.

As I traveled down High Street with Adrian one day, he was pointing out these fine, old homes called Valentine Square, Raven's Nest, etc. It would be nice for future generations to remember the names these homes had.

Well anyway, pardon my spelling and grammar. I just drank some coffee and give it to you in a nut shell. But, if you have any specific questions, let me know. My job doesn't allow me the time for researching. My nose is to the grind-stone, so it's hard to keep my chin up.

Take care,

William

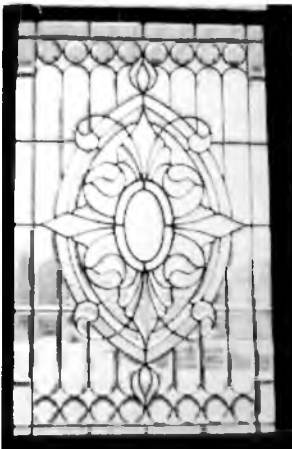


The History of Stained Glass in Huntsville

Wayne Lumpkin

Stained glass windows have been used for centuries in religious buildings, but have a much more limited history in residential and commercial applications.

For a period of about thirty years around the turn of the century, stained glass found its way into homes as a very popular decorative medium. Being relatively expensive, most was found in the finer Victorian homes built during that time.

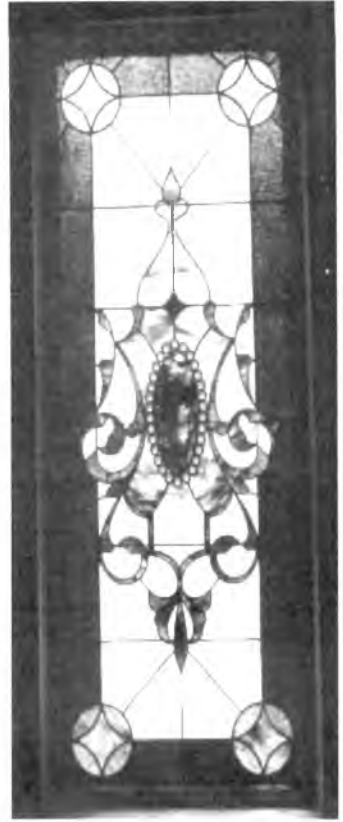
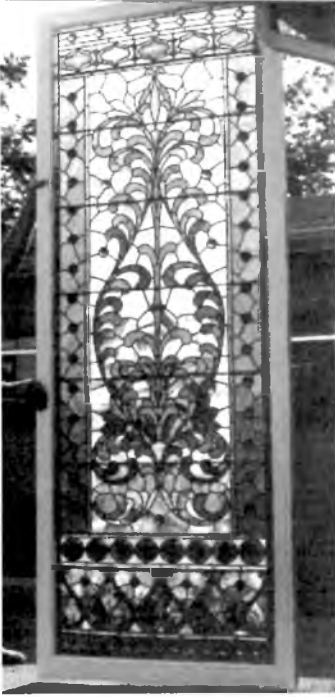


Leaded beveled glass for the front door of the Hundley House at 401 Madison.

Leaded beveled glass was considered more subtle and elegant than stained glass and was used mostly in or near the entrance, with stained glass in other areas of the home. Stained glass was used in parlor windows, dining room windows, transoms, and the grandest of all locations: the stairway landing.

South landing of the Hundley House, 401 Madison.

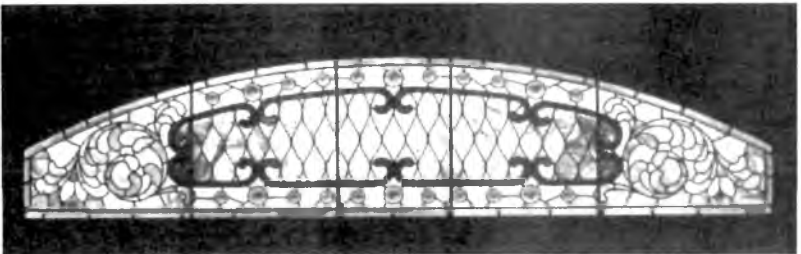




*ALL: From 403 Madison Street.
ABOVE: Lower landing window on
north side (approximately 32 X 96).*

*RIGHT: Upper landing window on north side (approximately
30 X 84).*

*BELOW: Transom over front window set on west side (ap-
proximately 89 x 19).*



Beginning in the 1920's, residential stained glass fell out of favor and was used very little until a resurgence of interest began to take hold in the 1970's. Its popularity and usage remain strong today.

Huntsville was not by-passed by the popularity of stained glass at the turn of the century. We are fortunate to have many residential and religious buildings surviving from that period that contain magnificent stained glass.

Unfortunately, many fine examples of stained glass were lost forever during urban renewal in the 1960's, and when some of the Victorian homes fell into disrepair and were torn down after years of neglect.

It would be interesting to know who made these windows, but it is rare to find a signature or records indicating where they were made. By the late 1800's there were many stained glass studios in the United States, mostly in the northeast or mid west. However, there is certainly the possibility that some windows were made in Europe and sent over for installation here. This was a common practice for religious windows in the years prior to the mid 1800's.

American studios were making extensive use of opalescent glass, a newly developed type of glass that Louis C. Tiffany claimed to have invented. This opaque glass is quite different from the transparent colored glass used for centuries prior to this time. Windows utilizing any of this glass would most certainly be American-made.

Tiffany Studios in New York was producing stained glass windows in great numbers for various residential,

religious and commercial application during this time. Although there are some Tiffany windows in Alabama, there are no known installations in Huntsville.

The Van Valkenburgh house at 501 Franklin Street (circa 1902) contains probably the most elaborate residential windows in Huntsville. The large parlor window on the north side portrays a scene from Greek mythology. The portico setting of the scene depicts a couple surrounded by foliage, a grape arbor, and a peacock; all executed in great detail with hundreds of individual pieces of glass. This window is most likely a copy of a Tiffany window done circa 1897 for the home of Pittsburgh's well known coal baron, William H. Brown.



Parlor window at Van Valkenburgh house, 501 Franklin.



A smaller, but maybe even more beautiful companion window graces the stairway landing on the east side of the house. A small stained glass window in an upper bedroom on the south side was recently uncovered after having been sheet rocked over many years ago. The main entrance and other areas in the home contain elegant examples of leaded beveled glass.

The stained glass in the Hundley house (circa 1900 at 401 Madison Street has an interesting history. At one time it was used as a funeral parlor. While the city owned the house from 1959 to 1982, a large window on the north side, a 3 piece landing window, a smaller pair of matching windows, and several beveled glass interior transoms were removed and put into storage. About 1982 the house was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Jim St. Clair who requested that the windows be returned to their original location. Unfortunately, the city would agree to return only the south bay landing window.

The north window, approximately 7 feet wide x 3 feet high, is currently on display in the foyer of the Huntsville Museum of Art. Also displayed there are the 2 matching windows, approxi-

mately 2 feet wide x 3 feet high, which have a wreath design. The city did agree to allow the St. Clair's credit against the purchase price of the house an amount equal to the cost of having the north window duplicated. Lumpkin Stained Glass was commissioned to make the copy and was allowed to make a pencil rubbing of the original to accurately reproduce the design containing some 1100 pieces of glass.



The south bay window consisting of 3 panels was returned to its original location in the home. This pictorial window depicts a semi-nude female sitting on a cluster of rocks by the seashore.

The front door originally contained a leaded bevel panel. For some reason it was removed and stored in the attic where it eventually became encrusted with dirt and pigeon droppings. During the time the city had offices in the house, it was given away. Fortunately there was a good photograph of the door panel and an accurate duplicate was made. Also during the city ownership the interior transoms disappeared.

In the mid 1960's. the First Baptist Church building at the NW corner of Clinton and Gallatin (now Spragins) was torn down after the church occupied its new building on Governors Drive. The old building was completed in 1895 and contained some 60 or so beautiful Victorian style windows of various designs, sizes, and shapes. Reportedly all of the windows were removed from the building, stacked in the front yard, and offered for sale for \$5.00

each. A few were sold and the remaining 50 or so windows found their way to a grain storage bin in Madison.

In 1971 Lumpkin Stained Glass purchased the windows for resale. Many of the windows were purchased by members of the First Baptist Church. Four of the windows were kept by the church at the time of demolition and used in the prayer room of the new facility. Another of the windows is in the prayer room at Huntsville Hospital.

Built in 1899, the Central Presbyterian Church at the corner of Randolph and Lincoln has three main windows which are magnificent examples of a combination of a scene surrounded by elaborate Victorian geometric designs.



If any record existed of the source of these windows, they were lost when all the church records were accidentally destroyed in 1957. The story goes that these windows were made by an itinerant maker of stained glass windows who wanted to do them to show his work in this area. This seems unlikely however, as the quality, complexity, and scale of these windows would have required the resources of a full fledged studio employing many skilled artists and craftsmen.

The Temple B'nai Sholom, also completed in 1899, has "swirling curvilinear patterns reflecting the influence of the Baroque (16th and 17th century) period of architecture, typically of glass of the late-Victorian period." (See *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*, Winter 1994). Synagogue records show that windows were purchased as memorials for \$25.00 to \$125.00 each.

The Church of the Nativity at 208 Eustis was dedicated in 1859. The windows were purchased by the architect who was in New York and happened to be British. The style and other features of the windows indicate that it is very possible that some or all of them could have been made in England.

The First Methodist Church, the First Presbyterian Church, and the Church of the Visitation all contain Victorian geometric style windows typical of the late 1800's.



Meet Wayne Lumpkin

A Gadsden native, Wayne came here to work for Brown Engineering. Stained glass began as a hobby, became a passion, and then a profession in 1975. You have probably already met his work around town and beyond. See the enclosed list of his area works. It is good that Huntsville can afford one of life's majestic arts—that of stained and leaded glass. Both in public places and private ones, Wayne's art has found appreciative audiences.

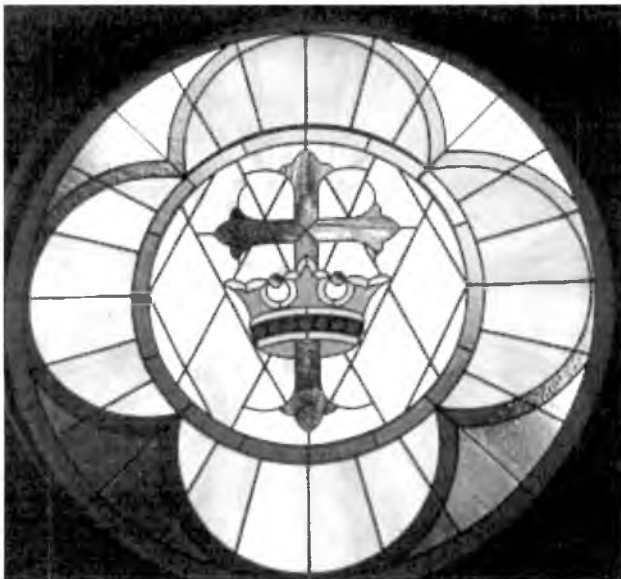
A modest man, Wayne quickly acknowledges his co-workers, especially Mrs. Frances Rahn Campbell. They make a formidably talented team. Mrs. Campbell was trained at the Hooseck Institute of Massachusetts. In 1985 they teamed to execute what might well be the “largest stained glass window in Alabama.” Called “Eternity” for the Chapel of Love Mausoleum at Valhalla Memory Gardens, the center panel is 26 feet high and eight feet across. The two side panels are each three feet wide and 13 feet high. The three windows contain 2,725 pieces of stained glass and cover a total of 270 square feet. Frances Campbell hand-painted and fired fifty-two tiles according to an Eleventh Century technique. Wayne executed the design and assured its structural integrity. The window’s richness and complexity called for numerous types of glass, including Flemish, opalescent, cathedral, graffiti glass, cats-paw opal, waterglass, and jewels made of glass.

A more recent collaboration with artist and designer Frances Campbell resulted in the stained-glass mural at the Aldersgate United Methodist Church on Bailey Cove Road.



Instead of being a window with its natural light, this stained-glass piece is backed by specially made neon tubes which provide the light. Jeff Komara of Neon Zeon designed the lighting which consists of over 200 feet of glass tubing “bent into odd shapes.” Robert Perrella, the art glazier at Lumpkin Stained Glass, played an integral role too. The design called for a 9-1/2 feet by 13-1/2 feet design.

Wayne Lumpkin has another passion, glassblowing. He collected art glass and then got the bug seven years ago. Each year he looks forward to taking a trek back in The Blue Ridge Mountains north of Asheville, North Carolina, to the Penland Arts & Crafts School. There his spirit is renewed and he can blow to his heart’s content. Fellow Huntsvillian Ursula Vann pots in that same soul-stretching mountain air. It must be close to heaven, as the products of their labors are deeply gratifying.



List of Works

ALABAMA

Anniston Area

- First Baptist Church of Saks
- First Baptist Church of Weaver

Athens

- 7 Mile Post Church of Christ
- Emmanuel Baptist
- First Church of God

Decatur

- Central Park Baptist
- First Methodist
- Wesley Methodist

Gadsden

- Whites Chapel Baptist

Huntsville Area

- Aldersgate Methodist
- Asbury Methodist, Madison
- Bevill's Chapel Baptist, Hazel Green
- First Christian
- Harvest Baptist
- Hazel Green Methodist
- Huntsville Holiness
- Keel Mountain Holiness, Gurley
- Locust Grove Baptist
- Midway Baptist
- Riverton Holiness
- St. Charles Anglican Church
- Trinity Baptist, Madison
- Valhalla Chapel
- Willowbrook Baptist

Shoals Area

- First Methodist—Sheffield
(Branscomb Memorial Window)
- High Street Church of Christ—Tuscumbia
- Spry Funeral Home

Vernon

- First Baptist

GEORGIA

Cobbtown

- Cobbtown Baptist

Dalton

- Grove Level Baptist

Elberton

- Church of Christ

Meansville

- First Nazarene

Ringgold
Boynton Church of God
Sumner
Pine Forest Baptist

KENTUCKY

Hopkinsville
Kelly Baptist
Perryville
Doctor's Fork Baptist

MISSISSIPPI

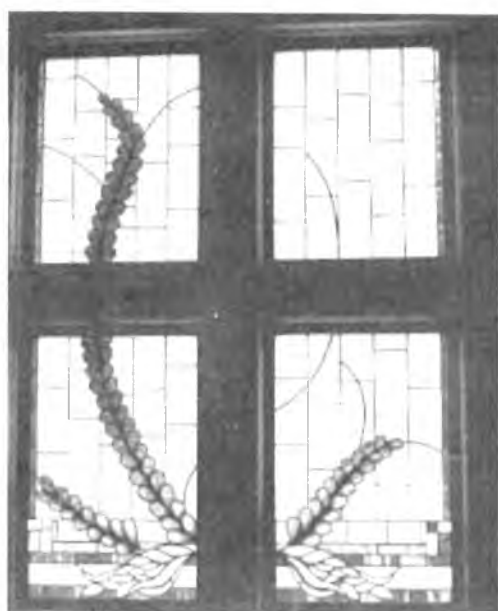
Blue Mountain
Lowery Memorial Baptist

TENNESSEE

Chattanooga Area
Brainerd Baptist
Central Park Baptist, Hixson
Hixson Methodist
Middle Cross Baptist, Hixson
Woodland Park Baptist
Clarksville
First Baptist
Crossville
New Hope Baptist
Daisy
Daisy Methodist
Etheridge
First Baptist
Park Grove Baptist
Gallatin
Lambuth Memorial Methodist
Lawrenceburg
Coleman Memorial Methodist
Deerfield Baptist
First Baptist
New Prospect Methodist
Lewisburg
Parkview Baptist
Parks City
Parks City Baptist
Tullahoma
First Methodist
Waynesboro
Green River Baptist
Winchester Area
Gum Creek Presbyterian
Harmony Presbyterian

Windows in Wayne Lumpkin's Sample Book













Charles A. Seiffried, Photographer

Church of the Nativity

Although the heaven-bound, 151 foot spire is the hallmark Huntsvillian's first note about the Church of the Nativity, it's stained glass windows number among the City's finest. Since the publication of Frances C. Roberts' comprehensive *Sesquicentennial History of Church of the Nativity, Episcopal 1843–1993 Huntsville, Alabama*, researchers have a ready, readable and reliable source of the church's history. This is not a review of the whole book as much as it is recognition of its utility as a reference. The Huntsville Public Library has a bound box of plans, negatives, and necessary data, prepared by Harvie P. Jones, to guide the building's restoration. But, this box is best left alone. Dr. Roberts' book is available to us all. It may be purchased in the church office. What follows about Nativity's stained glass windows comes from that handy source.

Citing Vestry Minutes, the Henry C. Lay letters to his wife, and *Williams Huntsville Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror*, Dr. Roberts provides the human dimension to a divine

undertaking. Young minister Lay's Episcopal congregation had outgrown its small church by 1856. That same year, when he was in Mobile at the new Trinity Church, Lay saw what he wanted in a church. Designed by transplanted British architects Frank Wills and Henry Dudley, Trinity represented the main thrust of the Ecclesiological movement, creation of a "medieval ceremonial space" replete with "Christian symbolism." Dr. Roberts explains:

Wills and Dudley used the Gothic style, with its pointed arches, vaulting patterns, buttresses, tracery, crockets, and finials, as a functional architectural form to build churches that could inspire those who worshiped therein to deepen their spiritual values which were most meaningful to them in living daily lives of Christian hope and love.

"As is the case with other churches planned by Wills," Roberts observes, "there were to be three tall arched memorial windows over the altar and a large window over the front door." Through arched stained glass windows encased in wood shone God's holy light on both outside aisles. Elizabeth Lay wrote Henry in December, 1858 that, "the church is progressing. The aisle windows are in and delight everybody." The City Directory (1859–60) bragged that "the Episcopal Church is a splendid specimen of Gothic architecture." It noted that "the chancel is lighted by three lancet windows of beautifully stained glass, with figures descriptive of Biblical incident. The aisles and nave are lighted by windows of tracery of varied description."

In an insert of colored photographs tucked between pages 148–149, the sanctuary, aisle, and back windows are given in vivid color and with a description of each. Since freight was paid on stained glass, the architects probably ordered it from New York. The cost of the windows was listed as \$1,573.30. What was undoubtedly a substantial amount of money in 1859 has, we can all agree, been heaven-spent.

Dr. Robert's history is so rich in detail and documentation that its usefulness exceeds the expectations of one simply seeking a church's history. See for yourself.



Charles A. Seifried, Photographer

*ABOVE: Windows above the altar.
LEFT WINDOW: St. Peter, with the Keys.
MIDDLE WINDOW: Christ, the Dove and the Nativity.
RIGHT WINDOW: St. Paul, with the Sword.*



*LEFT:
The Door
Windows.*

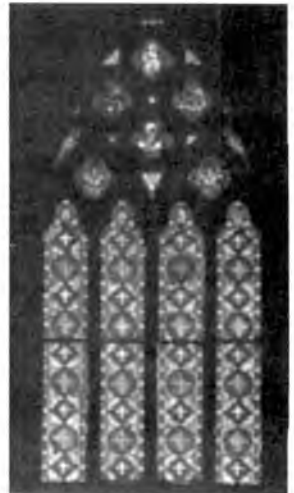
*RIGHT:
The Lamb of
God.*



*BELOW LEFT: The Church
Interior, 1990.*



*BELOW RIGHT: The Four
Evangelists at the Back
of the Church.*





Adding a Second Story

121 Smith Street

Sandra Ely

Our 1,000 square foot upstairs addition was the result of our desire for another bathroom. Our house is a small bungalow built about 1929, with plaster and lath walls. At some point, someone had added a shower head in the only bathroom by just running a pipe up the side of the wall over the tub. I'm sure this worked quite well for a time, but by the time we were bathing there, pieces of the plaster were likely to fall in the tub with you. So, after much discussion, we decided the best solution was to return the tub to its original use as only a tub. However, we really enjoyed the convenience of a shower and wanted one in our home. Where to put it? The answer to that problem is why we now have a second story.

The only access to our attic was through a small hole (trap door) in the kitchen ceiling. You had to climb up a ladder (not a pull-down), push over the cover to the hole, and climb through. There was just space enough to stand up at the roof ridge. Since there was not sufficient head room to stand upright in the attic, our decision was to add an entire second story.

The next big decision was where to put a staircase. We looked through numerous books on bungalows and Craftsman cottages to try to determine the most appropriate way to handle this problem. We finally decided the most convenient place for us, though maybe not completely appropriate, was the kitchen. Any other location would have meant the loss of a bedroom, and we had planned on gaining space in the kitchen by moving the water heater, washing machine, and dryer, which we didn't want in there anyway. By putting the staircase in the kitchen, we were also able to put a small door under it, giving us indoor access to the existing small basement right under the kitchen.



The staircase, taken from the EastBrook Springs Resort, during installation in the kitchen.

We had been helping some of our neighbors in dismantling the EastBrook Springs Resort on the Elk River (see *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*, Fall 1994), so we knew we had access to building materials we could use. Also, friends and family had given us various things. My sister gave me an old pedestal sink for Christmas one year; one of our thoughtful neighbors left a newel post on our front porch, knowing we could probably use it; another friend found us an old footed tub (without feet) in a junk yard; etc. My sister Gail had, with the help of one of my brothers-in-law, taken out the oak flooring of a building being torn down in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. She had been planning on using it herself but offered it to us. Some of the boards are stamped “Victory” on the back side. (Oak Ridge was built during World War II as part of the Manhattan project. When we moved there, you had to have a badge to get in the city gates.) We used this flooring upstairs.



Looking out through the new window openings that are covered with plastic. The wood is some of the flooring my sister, Gail, salvaged from a building in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The ridge board of our new space was to be raised and turned at a 90° angle to the existing roof. By changing the bracing of the rafters and flooring the original attic, we gained about 300 square feet of much-needed storage space along with the 670 square feet of new living space.

The estimated time of completion of the work we wanted done was six months, and we opted to stay in our home during the restoration/construction. We thought we might house-sit for people going out of town to give us some relief from the construction, and we did have at least one opportunity to do so, which we turned down. I've read that this is not uncommon for other people in the same circumstances—you just can't leave what's going on. So, we lived in one room for the nine months it took for the work to be completed. Incidentally, that room might still be locked and unused, with its crumbling walls and falling ceiling, if my sister Gail (everyone should have a sister like Gail) hadn't come down from Tennessee three consecutive weekends and completely repaired the plaster. That room is now known as Gail's room.



The room we lived in for nine months during renovation and construction.

After the roof was punched through for the second story, the exterior framing and tar-papering were completed in one day. Evening rain had been predicted, and this was one of the times the prediction was correct. The work crew looked like ants or worker bees swarming all over the place. My husband, Dave, was up there helping, trying to get plastic cover over us before nightfall; and just as the rain started, they had it done! The Palladian window we had custom made for the upstairs didn't come for a couple of months, so the hole for it was covered with plastic. When the plastic flapped in the breeze, the sound was slightly reminiscent of tall ships—it was pretty neat.

We experienced many unexpected problems, as most people do. Right before we were ready to start construction, our oven went out, and since we were converting to gas, we didn't bother getting it fixed. As a result, I'd come home, hunt for the stove (it was moved all over the house from day to day), and cook whatever I could on the top burners. A window in our kitchen had been covered over on the inside, and we wanted to open it back up. When the new custom-built cabinets were installed, the window was off center. I took one look and said someone was going to have to move that window—it was moved. Water was left standing for so long in the new upstairs tub, to ensure it would hold, we had mosquitoes breeding there.



These are just a few experiences that kept everything so interesting. Now we have nice additional space for family and friends. It has been well worth it, but I'm not sure I would ever care to do it again.



**New Windows Offer a Bright New Perspective
on the World**







We Bought This!

Kyle Johnson

It all began with one of those articles in the paper about someone else's unusual life. My fiance, Steve Broadfoot, had read a story about a family of four who were renovating an old house while living in one room at a time. "That sounds like fun," he said.

I remember laughing and saying that that did not sound like fun to me, and that I was not an old house "fixer-upper." Famous last words! And, that if that was what he wanted in a wife, he best look elsewhere.

Well, we got married anyway. The article faded into a dim memory for me. Not so for Steve. After three years of marriage, and renting, we began house hunting in earnest. Somehow, we ended up at 313 White Street. We had put earnest money down,

or come “this close” to buying other old houses. But, no, this truly-falling-apart dump looked good to us. We could both see the glorious possibilities underneath the funky colors, maze-like layout, and dilapidated condition. He said we’d be done in three years. I said ten. Wrong on both counts, but we had a mission!



The first time I saw the “13” in the address I wondered if this boded poorly for us—and the fact that we ended up moving in on Halloween should have been the clinching piece of information that I needed to send me screaming in the opposite direction. Oh, I failed to mention that somewhere during the move Steve was bitten by a brown recluse. So, he spent the first night, and the following week of life in our “new home,” sick as a dog.

Bad went to worse. We spent two months without heat because of a lying contractor. And, that’s not fun with 11 foot ceilings and 13’ X 14’ rooms. Of course, the little space heaters we bought overloaded our inadequate fuse boxes. It was cold.

However, we learned valuable lessons. Lesson #1—Always call the city inspector FIRST to find out what the “code” actually is. Do not rely on even the best-referenced contractor to tell you the truth. Especially if you live downtown. Somehow, when repair trucks roll down the street, the price jumps with each house they pass.

On top of the fact that we had spent every last cent, and then some, to buy the house (we even considered selling the silver), we were faced with immediate problems. The roof was hardly a roof. It had no flashing, and barely kept the rain out. Minor problem. The cat became deathly ill with a brain abscess, caused by an ear infection, compounded by having to be spayed. The sewer backed up almost as soon as we began living in the house. All we needed was money.

To repair the sewer, Steven decided that he and a friend could rent the equipment and clean the line more cheaply than calling a pro. We learned fast. The only hitch in this case was that Steve and his friend were neophytes, and “lost” 40 feet of snake in the sewer line. So, we had to call the pros after all. They retrieved the snake, unblocked the line, were nice, to boot, for less than Steve had spent renting the equipment. Lesson #2—Always leave sewer lines to professionals.

We decided to tackle the roof, and had great difficulty finding a roofer willing to scale our hip roof. But, we finally found one. Get ready for Lesson #3—It always costs more and takes much longer than any contractor will admit. “Oh, yes ma’m,” he could, “roof the house without having to put down decking. Those pieces of irregularly-laid pine strips were plenty to nail shingles to.” And, he could have this job done in a week, week-and-a-half, MAX.

As the first shingles came off, the rains began. And lasted. Of course, the day I got home from work, and they were finally on the roof working, I should have sensed doom. Steve met me at the car, opened the door for me, and helped me out (bad sign), as though I were nine months pregnant. “Honey,” he said, “remember that decking?” Yes, we had to buy lots of plywood, along with the shingles, tar paper and nails. To top that, the police came to take two of the roofers from our roof in handcuffs one day. Couldn’t they have at least waited until 5 o’clock?

And, of course, several months later, and several times after that, our new roof leaked. Lesson #4—Everything on, and in, an old house needs to be done at least three times before you can assume it is “fixed.”

I learned to appreciate the history of this old house. Our neighbor across the street, Mr. Fred Monroe, would bring us watercress in a brown paper bag during the summer. Plus, he and his wife, Irene, would have us over for a drink sometimes in the late afternoon. They would give us huge glasses filled with crushed ice and bourbon. Mr. Monroe never took the first sip until the clock chimed 5 o’clock. He and Mrs. Monroe would regale us with tales of old times in Huntsville. Foolishly, I never wrote it all down. They were wonderful, and I miss them.

Mrs. Louise Marsh told us of living down on the corner from us in “old Sam Butler’s” house, and having a best friend who lived in our house. She told us the name of the woman, but again, it never made it to paper. Mrs. Marsh said that the woman had become an author of some renown, and we should contact her. We were too busy trying to survive. I am sorry that I missed that opportunity, too.

The house sits on parts of Lot No. 8 and Lot No. 9 in the Poplar Hill addition, March 1, 1888. This was developed by C. H. Halsey, W. L. Halsey, and J. R. Yeatman. They sold Lot No. 9 to Charles Bassett on April 21, 1888, for \$1,000. Mr. Bassett sold Lot No. 9 to James B. and Daniel R. Harrison on April 20, 1893, for \$400. He was the first owner to take a loss.

Lots No. 7 and No. 8 were sold to Miss Sarah Leech on March 19, 1888, for \$850. She sold both these lots to Laura McCracken for \$10 on April 23, 1901. Then on April 30, 1906, James B. Harrison bought Lot No. 8 and 30 feet of Lot No. 7 from Ms. McCracken for \$450.

We assume that James B. Harrison built our house sometime after 1906, probably around 1910. We also assume that the house was built for family members, or as rental property. There were no more transactions until 1953, when Sarah M. Harrison left Lots. Nos. 7, 8, and 9 to Sarah Caldwell Huff in her will. Mrs. Huff and her husband sold the parts of Lots Nos. 8 and 9 to Katherine Womack in 1954.

In looking at old city directories, we found our house listed as rental property from the 1920's through the 1980's.

Sometime around 1957, Ms. Womack turned the house into a duplex. She closed off the main hall, added a second door on the front porch, and added a second kitchen and bath. When we moved in, we had two of everything—two kitchens, two bathrooms, two front doors, two back doors, and a maze of passages worthy of any psychology experiment. We dubbed one side of the house “The Good Side” (HA!) and the other side “The Bad Side.” The good side was “livable” and the bad side was falling in on itself, literally. We found out from our neighbors that the house had been vacant for so long that squatters had moved in on the bad

side. The neighbors thought they were the new tenants until they realized there were never any lights on at night. The squatters were removed by the police.

The windows fit so poorly that when the wind blew so did the curtains and blinds. Talk about old houses being drafty! It was more like a gale. When we had the storm windows put on, it reduced our heating bill by half. Plus, it didn't sound like every car, or person, passing was in the house with us. A miracle!

We knew that the floor in the bad kitchen (the one with the hand-painted, "hazard-sign yellow" and white tiles plus lovely fluorescent orange trim), sagged very badly. Only several years later did we learn that the reason it sagged was much worse than we had suspected. Some "helpful" plumber at an earlier time had removed most of the foundation to get to the pipes. He had failed to replace the foundation. So, 16-foot spans of floor joists were hanging in mid air. No wonder the floor bounced a lot. We found out that the siding on the house was the only thing holding the walls up.



It was amazing that once the foundation and sill were replaced—viola!—not only did the floor no longer sag, but that nasty ridge in the roof subsided.

In the process of returning the house to its present condition, Steve moved windows and doors, added doors and windows, moved walls (even load-bearing walls), removed fireplaces, rebuilt fireplaces, torn down four chimneys and rebuilt one. He tore off the existing concrete and wrought iron front porch, and replaced it with a wooden one designed by Ralph Allen. He painstakingly patched and replastered the dining room. We ended up sheetrocking over the new cracks and crevices that appeared in that room later. Lesson #5—Plaster is hell.



Steve gutted the entire back half of the bad side, and shoveled out dirt to give the new floor joists some clearance. He added the back porch to the house and stairs up to the unused attic space. He scraped three sides of the house to the bare wood and primed and painted them. The list goes on and on.

Steve learned so much from this house that he went on to get an actual degree in restoring old houses, and went into contracting for himself. I, on the other hand, know just enough to be dangerous.

Anyway, to make a long story short, after 13 years of living here I have come to love this house. Half-finished, money-absorbing place that it is, I can't imagine living anywhere else. Except, of course, when things like the ceiling in a room falls in because of a still-leaking roof. Then, I not only have to get the room fixed, I have to have the entire back half of the house re-roofed. These are the times I fantasize about brand new houses with plumb walls, level floors, real bathrooms, and lots of closets.

With the exception of the attic, the only two rooms that remain basically unaltered after all this time are my bedroom and bath. Um, except for the two plastic bags taped to my ceiling where Kevin Miller put his foot through not once, but twice, while sistering 2-by-12 rafters in the attic. But, that is another story...

We took a ramshackle duplex that had been rental property since the 1920's and attempted to make it "a little more Presbyterian looking," as my grandfather would say. The house has withstood vagaries of wind and weather, but our marriage did not withstand our Gypsy existence in living from room to room.

The only thing that has saved me and kept me going during all these years of “learning” has been having terrific neighbors, family, and friends. And, also some wonderful contractors. Here is a partial list of those who have helped to rebuild and maintain “This Old House.”

Linda and Ralph Allen; Barbara and Jerry Barclay; Bud Beinvenu; Alvin Blackwell; Suzanne and Scott Bradley; Bob Broadfoot, Sr.; Bob Broadfoot, Jr.; Blevins Plumbing; Tom Carney and Elvis; Keith Clines; Kyleen and Toney Daly; Penn Dilworth and everyone at Dilworth Lumber; Kathleen and Phil Dotts; Pat Earles; Mary Ann and Gene Ezell; Nancy and Jim Gaines; Janice Hammonds; Jack Hengel; Melissa Hiley; HHF; Jesse and Gene at All Weather; my father, Warren Lee Johnson, my dear mother, Mildred Johnson, and brothers Lee and William; Hubert Jones; William Jones; Larry, Mike, Steve, Scottie and everyone at Old South Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning; Tom Lewallen; Bill Lewis; Lewter’s Hardware; Wayne Lumpkin; Mad River Woodworks; Nancy and Randy Martin; Robin and Tony Mason, and Tony’s father; Callie McNiel Vincent; Kevin Merrill; Bill Miller; Kevin Mill; Fred and Irene Monroe; Jonathan Moore; John Mullen; Nancy and Bill Munson; William Neely; Kay Parrish; Mary Lee and Lee Prout; Roto-Rooter; Lee Sanderson; Jane Scott and family; Mancil Self; Kate and Rob Sexton; Jamey Starkey; Linda Stone; Lee Ward; and Burt Webster.

I’m sure there are many others whom I’ve either left out inadvertently, or forgotten. I apologize. But, all these people deserve most of the credit for helping this house make it this far. I plan to go further; if I can only win the lottery!

FROM JUNK TO JEWEL



Good kitchen, 1982 (above), is transformed into the guest bedroom, 1995 (below).





The study as it appeared in 1983 (above); the study as it appears today (1995).





"Bad" bath, 1982 (above); guest bath, 1995 (below).





Dining room (above), and taking out the second front door (below left), 1983. Bad kitchen with new floor joists (below right), 1986.





*A "new" room with a view,
(above) and "new" kitchen
(right), 1995.*





ABOVE: Back of the house, October 1995.

BELOW: Front porch and author, February 1994.



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