

THREE DOLLARS

SPRING 1998

THE  
HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE QUARTERLY  
OF LOCAL ARCHITECTURE AND PRESERVATION



**RESTORATION AND REMEMBRANCE:  
THE HUNTSVILLE PILGRIMAGE**

# HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION

Founded 1974

## Officers for 1997-1998

Ben Walker .....	Chairman
Lauren B. Martinson .....	Vice-Chairman
Brenda Courtney .....	Secretary
B. J. Robinson .....	Treasurer
Diane Ellis (Immediate Past Chairman) .....	Ex-Officio
Kay Anderson .....	Management Committee
Elise H. Stephens .....	Editor

## Board of Directors

Jane Barr	Carol Kamback
Delia Black	Sarah Lauren Kattos
Harold Coldwater	Walter Kelley
Margaret Cole	Dr. Mabry Miller
Ollye Conley	Rod Moak
Richard Curtis	Nancy Munson
Billie Grosser	Loch Neely
Margaret Anne Hanaw	Roger Nicholson
Carol Harless	Gerald Patterson
Buzz Heesch	Jim Phillips
June Hough	Dale Rhoades
Kyle Johnson	Bill Rutledge
Lynn Jones	Nancy Van Valkenburgh
	Sybil Wilkinson

### Cover:

The Bernstein-Charlton House, 110 Steele Street. Ca. 1881. Originally a two-storied house with one room on each floor, the house had fallen into extreme disrepair in recent times and was regarded as a "lost cause." The house now shines as a perfect example of creative restoration undertaken by its imaginative architect, builder and owners. Courtesy Charles Winters.

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

Vol. XXIV, No. 1

Spring—1998

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

From The HHF Board Chair—Ben Walker .....	2
From The Editors .....	3
History of the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association .....	7
<i>Jean Walker</i>	
The Huntsville Pilgrimage Association’s 1998 Tour .....	9
<i>John Rison Jones, jr.</i>	
Annual Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll.....	15
<i>Margaret Belle Crow</i>	
Maple Hill Restoration .....	23
<i>Brenda Webb, Perky Taylor, and Margaret Belle Crow</i>	
The 1835 Mary Bibb Mausoleum.....	27
<i>Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A.</i>	
What’s in a Tombstone? .....	31
<i>Dorothy Scott Johnson</i>	
“Mementoes of Affection” .....	39
<i>Frances Osborn Robb</i>	
“Ladies Tresses” .....	41
<i>Margaret J. Vann</i>	

## **From the Chair...Ben Walker**

As the son of a naval officer, my childhood and early teens were spent bouncing up and down the East Coast from Charleston to Boston. My parents, having a keen interest in the history of this nation, made sure I was exposed to every possible site and building within their reach from the North Church in Boston to the Battery in Charleston. I never minded this as some youths might. To the contrary, it was fundamental in my forming a lifelong interest in historical buildings and places which has increased with each passing year.

Even with this exposure I think my most vivid early teen memory concerning historic places involves the Huntsville Pilgrimage. I made that tour in the spring of 1955, less than a year after arriving in Huntsville. As a lad of 16 I was deeply impressed by the beauty and the history of the homes in the areas we toured. I have a vivid memory of an older couple standing near me commenting that "this is as good as Charleston." I also remember the feeling of civic pride their comment generated even though I was an insignificant teenager who had lived in Huntsville only for about one year. I think the experience points out both the uniqueness of Huntsville and the value of the Pilgrimage. I doubt that my youthful experience was an isolated occurrence. How nice it is to live in a city that has such an undertaking and has pursued it for such a long time!

The same is also true with regard to Maple Hill Cemetery and the many people who work so hard to preserve and promote it. I applaud the tireless efforts of those involved. Like most worthwhile efforts, much of this goes unnoticed and unfortunately a considerable amount is consumed overcoming bureaucratic opposition. Maple Hill is a treasure to be cherished; thank goodness for those who stand in the breach.

We at Historic Huntsville Foundation are excited and pleased to support both the Huntsville Pilgrimage and the Maple Hill Cemetery preservation efforts and tour. I encourage all of you as members to take advantage of these events and obtain a full appreciation of what we have that is unique to Huntsville.

## From the Editors

This issue began in alarm, after the *Quarterly's* long-time editor, Elise Hopkins Stephens, left Huntsville for a new teaching position on the deck of the *Seagull II* in Galveston Harbor. It ended in relief, as the Spring 1998 issue rolled off the presses and into the mailbags.

Conventional wisdom has it that no journal should ever be produced by committee, but with the Foundation's editorial helmsman steering west to Texas, it was "all hands on board" back in Huntsville. Elise had set the general direction of the spring issue when she agreed to work with the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association on a publication that would serve the needs of both the Association and Historic Huntsville Foundation. An issue featuring the 1998 Pilgrimage and its major beneficiary Maple Hill Cemetery would continue the *Quarterly's* focus on historic architecture while broadening it to include the monuments of the cemetery.

A committee headed by Diane Ellis was formed. It included Margaret Belle Mahoney Crow, Lynn Jones, Frances Osborn Robb, Patricia Ryan, and Jean Hall Dwyer. Margaret Belle is a Pilgrimage board member and a member of the Cemetery Committee. She co-chairs the Restoration Project and the City of Huntsville Cemetery Advisory Committee. Lynn Jones, a civic volunteer and tireless worker on historic architecture and preservation projects, represented the Foundation Board.

Author Patricia Ryan represented the Huntsville Pilgrimage board. Photograph historian Frances Osborn Robb volunteered her editorial expertise. Jean Hall Dwyer of Alabama A&M University, who had worked with Elise on layouts and production on the *Quarterly* for several years, agreed to help.

Margaret Belle's copious data on Maple Hill and her volumes of photographs proved invaluable. She acted as liaison with the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association, whose president Alice Thomas and members supported the joint effort wholeheartedly. The Association provided images by free-lance photographer Ann Montes, a native Californian with a long-time interest in photography, especially historical architecture, and nationally recognized artist Cynthia Massey Parsons, as well as articles by Margaret Belle, Jean Walker, and John Rison Jones, jr.

Jean, a member of Historic Huntsville Foundation and a Weeden House governing committee member, authored the history of the Association. John Rison, a member of the Pilgrimage board, has an enduring interest in Huntsville and its history. Perky Taylor, a Pilgrimage board member, and co-chair of the Cemetery Committee Restoration Project worked with Brenda Webb, the City of Huntsville cemeteries manager, and Margaret Belle Crow on an article about restoration work at Maple Hill.

Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A., award-winning preservation architect who has been active in historic preservation on a local, regional and national scale since 1970, contributed an article on the restoration of the Bibb monument. Author Dorothy Scott Johnson, who edited the Tennessee Valley Genealogical Society quarterly for eight years, contributed an article that keys important monument types to examples in Maple Hill Cemetery. Frances Robb contributed a brief note on a lost 1851 daguerreotype of Maple Hill Cemetery.

A delightful endnote was contributed by Margaret Vann, poet, wildflower collector, and cemetery lover (through the example of her grandfather Charles Lee Jones, who owned a monument company in Valdosta, Georgia). Margaret's poem reminds us that cemeteries are not simply groups of tombs and tombstones. Cemeteries are a special kind of architecture, composed of monuments and markers, plantings and naturalized meadows, enlivened by those who visit and those who are buried there.

The spring *Quarterly* committee dedicates this issue to Elise Stephens. Her blithe spirit, formidable network, dedication and unceasing good humor were in our minds' eyes as we prepared this publication. Like the figurehead on a tall-masted schooner, Elise led us across unknown editorial waters to a successful landfall. We hope that you will enjoy this issue of the *Quarterly*, and gain from it renewed insight into Huntsville's historic architecture, including that of Maple Hill Cemetery.



*Grave marker of Lenora Schiffman, in the Jewish plot, Maple Hill Cemetery. Courtesy Margaret Belle Crow. The marker on this "memento of affection" reads "Lenora d. Sept. 9 1895 age 8 yrs., 4 mo. Rest darling, rest in quiet sleep/While Mama in sorrow oer thee weep."*

# HUNTSVILLE PILGRIMAGE HOME TOUR

**April 18, 1998**

## *Six Beautiful Historic Homes*

- 1892 Neece-Lotz • 1888 Lane-Davidson •
- 1881 Bernstein-Charlton • 1853 Smith Academy-Leberte •
- 1818 Cruse-Bassett-Welker • 1912 White-Fursdon •

## *Plus*

- Four Churches • Weeden House •
- Historic Huntsville Depot • Alabama Constitution Village •
- Harrison Brothers •

## *Tickets*

\$10 each tour, \$18 both tours.

Groups of 20 persons or more, \$15 both tours.

## **CEMETERY STROLL**

**April 19, 1998**

*For More Information Call*  
551-2230 or 1-800-772-2348

Huntsville Pilgrimage Association  
P.O. Box 2992  
Huntsville, AL 35804

# History of the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association

*by Jean Walker*

The Huntsville Pilgrimage Association, which celebrates its thirteenth anniversary this year, was the inspiration of Jayne Lowry and Leslie Crowson, partners in Huntsville Heritage Tours. On their travels to famous pilgrimage cities like Natchez and Savannah, they had found that Huntsville had as much or more to offer.

Their conviction was that Huntsville, which offers world-renowned exhibits in space exploration and rocket development, also affords beautiful historic areas rich in southern history. They found others in the community who shared their love of Huntsville and its historic past and organized the board of the Pilgrimage Association. That original board included Leslie Crowson, Jayne Lowry, Jack Burwell, Nell Bragg, Lynne Lowery, Bill Rutledge, Judy Ryals, Nanette Yarn, Alice Thomas, Christine Richard and Jean Walker. Margaret Strickland has served as secretary to the board.

The first Pilgrimage, which coincided with the blooming of the dogwoods, was held on April 13 and 14, 1985. The organization's objective was "To advance the appreciation and preservation of the historic heritage of Huntsville and Madison County." Everyone associated with this endeavor also realized the Pilgrimage's potential for bringing in tourists as a complement to the attractions already having an economic impact on the area.

Since that first Pilgrimage thirteen years ago, more than 120 homes in Huntsville's two historic areas and in Madison County have been open for tours. The tours have drawn tourists to our area and have also provided an opportunity for north Alabama residents to see Huntsville's history through the architecture and ambiance of beautiful old homes.

Proceeds from the Pilgrimage have been used for restoration and preservation of the historic area of Maple Hill Cemetery. When the Pilgrimage Association became aware of the need to protect this bit of Huntsville's history, which is victim to vandalism and disrepair, they worked with cemetery staff to supply craftsmen and materials for restoring historic

markers and the fences that surrounded their plots. Each year the Pilgrimage sponsors a stroll through the historic part of Maple Hill Cemetery, complete with period characters who explain their family history.

This April, when the dogwoods bloom again, the doors to more beautiful Huntsville homes will be opened for tours. The Huntsville Pilgrimage Association invites the *Quarterly's* readers to join the Pilgrimage of homes on Saturday, April 18 and the Maple Hill Cemetery stroll on Sunday, April 19.

### ***Huntsville Pilgrimage Association, 1997-1998***

Alice Thomas, President  
Vennette Charlton, Vice President  
Margaret Strickland, Secretary  
David Ely, Treasurer

Paula Brown  
Ron Cooper  
Margaret Belle Crow  
Ruth Ann Geer  
Margaret Henson  
Bertha Hereford  
Dr. John Rison Jones, jr.  
Jayne Lowry

Frank Moring  
Thomas R. Robinson  
Patricia Ryan  
Pam Stieglitz  
Perky Taylor  
Martha Vandiver  
Jean Walker  
Lisa Yokley

Marcia Cobun, Advisory Board Member  
Harvey Cotten, Advisory Board Member  
Lee Sentell, Advisory Board Member

## **The Huntsville Pilgrimage Association's 1998 Tour**

*by John Rison Jones, jr.*

On Saturday, April 18, 1998, the annual tour of the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association will feature six historic residences. Two are superb antebellum houses. Four are late 19th and early 20th century buildings, including a recent, highly successful restoration of an 1881 rental property.

Four churches, the Church of the Nativity, the First United Methodist Church, the First Presbyterian Church, and St. Mary's Church of the Visitation, will be open all day on tour day, as will Harrison Brothers Hardware Store and the Masonic Temple, Helion Lodge Number 1. Individuals with Pilgrimage tickets will receive free admission to Huntsville Depot Museum, Alabama Constitution Village, and the Weeden House Museum on tour day. The Regions Bank, constructed in 1835 by noted Huntsville architect George Steele, will serve as Pilgrimage Headquarters.

The morning Pilgrimage tour will feature three late 19th and early 20th century residences: the Neece-Lotz House, the Lane-Davidson House, and the Bernstein-Charlton House. Two antebellum residences—the Smith Academy-Leberte House and the Cruse-Bassett-Welker House—and the early 20th century White-Fursdon House will be shown on the afternoon tour.

The earliest of two antebellum houses featured on the Pilgrimage is the Cruse-Bassett-Welker residence at 600 Franklin Street. It was built for Samuel Cruse about 1818. A handsome Federal-style townhouse, it may be the work of Thomas and William Brandon, Huntsville's earliest builders.

The simplicity and elegant brick work of the Cruse-Bassett-Welker house make it an excellent example of Federal architecture. Its style resembles that of residences in Franklin, Tennessee and Abingdon, Virginia. The rose-brown hue of the brick is especially notable. The fan light transoms to the south and east and the Adams-style mantel in the parlor are fine decorative features. Visitors should note the separate buildings that once housed the kitchen (later made into an apartment) and the smoke house.

The house's north wing was added in the 1920s.

In 1834, the Cruse property was deeded by Peter Hoffman to Samuel Peete, an attorney originally from Limestone County, who married the daughter of Benjamin S. Pope, who lived down the street at 621 Franklin. In 1846, Huntsville surgeon Dr. John V. Bassett purchased the property (family tradition holds that the Bassett family were already living in the residence). Five generations of the Bassett and Young families occupied the house until 1993, when Sophie Lowe Young, the last Bassett-Lowe descendant, died.



*The Cruse-Bassett-Welker House, 600 Franklin Street.  
Courtesy Huntsville Pilgrimage Association.*

Sophie Lowe Young, the daughter of druggist Ben Lee Young and his wife Sophie Davis Young, was Dr. John Bassett's great-granddaughter. Through her mother's family, the Mannings, Sophie Lowe Young inherited magnificent Federal-style furniture that had once filled the Manning's imposing residence, The Grove. One of Huntsville's grandest residences, The Grove stood near the present Mental Health Building on Gallatin Street. It was demolished about 1912.

Before the demolition, Sophie Davis Young moved The Grove's handsome early furniture to the Young's Franklin Street residence, where they are today a special feature of the Cruse-Bassett-Welker house. Six family portraits, originally part of The Grove's elaborate furnishings, were given by Sophie Lowe Young to the Weeden House Museum, where they may be seen by Pilgrimage visitors.

The second antebellum residence on the 1998 Pilgrimage is the Smith Academy-Leberte House, 706 Adams Street. It was built for attorney David Humphreys and his wife in 1853. In June of 1854, Dr. Carlos Smith, who lived next door at 704 Adams, purchased the property to house his Smith Academy, one of several Huntsville schools for young males (Dr. Smith later served as president of the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa from 1874-1878).

The original two-story building preserves the original handmade glass window panes, mortised mantels, wide-plank pine flooring, staircase, and six-by-six cedar sills and woodwork. The triple-thick walls are constructed of handmade brick, inside and out. The downstairs ceilings are twelve feet high; the upstairs ceilings are eleven feet. Later owners made only two major exterior alterations, removing an entrance stoop and, at some time later, painting the brick.

In 1993, Dr. and Mrs. Mark Leberte purchased the property. With the help of architect Harvie Jones, additional living space, an enclosed courtyard, a detached guest suite, and a garage were added at the rear of the building.

The post-Civil War residences on the 1998 Pilgrimage include two handsome late 19th century residences at 509 and 507 Adams Street. The earliest, the Lane-Davidson House, was built in 1888 by newspaperman and lawyer Charles Lane, the son of Madison County Circuit Court Judge George W. Lane.

In the late 1880s Charles Lane, who had a growing family, decided to build a residence next door to his father, who lived at 511 Adams Street. The family moved into the house in 1889. The residence has an asymmetrical front gable and a full-width porch. It is a fine example of Colonial Revival architecture, a style which became very popular after the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition.

Next door to the Lane-Davidson House is another Colonial Revival residence, the White-Fursdon House. It was built about 1912 by Edith Branch Law White as a residence for her mother. In later years, the front porch was enclosed. The property was inherited by Mrs. White's son and remained in the family until 1994, when it was sold to Huntsville antiques dealer Valerie Fursdon.

Of particular interest are the furnishings reflecting Ms. Fursdon's love of antiques and objects d'art. Ms. Fursdon is a native of England; her collection reflects her taste and knowledge of English and Continental styles.

Across town is an area known as the East Huntsville Addition that was developed by the Dallas Manufacturing Company in the late 1880s. In 1892, the company deeded property in the addition to Moses H. Neece, who built a Victorian residence on the lot at 704 Holmes Street. Its original style—Free Classic Hipped Roof Queen Anne—is a complex blend of late 19th century architectural features. In 1995, it was acquired by Peter Lotz, the present owner.

Extensive modifications to the Neece-Lotz house show a blend of Victorian and modern Greek Revival styles. The second story has been opened and dormer windows added. A period staircase from a Victorian residence in south Alabama now enhances the entrance hall.

Perhaps the most innovative house on the 1998 Pilgrimage is the Bernstein-Charlton House at 110 Steele Street. The property was originally part of a large tract purchased by John Brahan in 1809. Later, Huntsville's noted antebellum architect George Steele acquired much of the land bounded by Holmes, Lincoln, Clinton and Calhoun Streets for his business. In 1881, merchant Morris Bernstein purchased the 110 Steele Street lot. Bernstein built the first house on the site, a small two-story house with one room on each floor, probably as rental property.

Run-down and regarded as an eyesore, the Bernstein house has recently been imaginatively restored. Mr. and Mrs. Jack Charlton, who acquired the property in 1995, worked with builder Joe Watson and architect Harvie Jones to rescue and improve the small house. A low, inconspicuous addition creates a large living space for the new owners. A porch with Victorian-style “gingerbread” creates an inviting entrance into the old building and the new addition.

The 1917 Masonic Temple, Helion Lodge Number 1 (Alabama’s oldest Masonic lodge) will be on view throughout the day. The Temple’s entrance hall contains early memorabilia of the Lodge, including the large-scale portrait of George Washington, painted by Huntsville artist William Halsey in 1849 for the original 1825 Lodge building. The portrait, a copy of the well-known Gilbert Stuart “Lansdowne Washington,” is one of the state’s most important art treasures by an Alabama artist.



*Helion Lodge Number 1, 409 Lincoln Street. Courtesy Huntsville Pilgrimage Association.*

The Weeden House Museum will also be open all day. Among its treasures are the six family portraits given by Sophie Lowe Young to the museum after her death. The portraits of Manning and Lowe family members include four works by Kentucky artist John Grimes, who worked in Huntsville in 1820 and 1834. These portraits are being restored by a generous grant from the Doris Burwell Foundation. Portraits of Nicholas Davis, jr, and his wife Sophie Lowe Davis, both by Huntsville artist William Frye, are scheduled for restoration later in the year.

The Huntsville Pilgrimage Association's 1998 tour of historic buildings offers a wonderful glimpse into Huntsville life from statehood to the present, and an unusual opportunity to enjoy some of Huntsville's art treasures.

*The Archangel Gabriel holding a trumpet, Fennell monument, Roman Catholic plot, Maple Hill Cemetery.*  
Courtesy Ann Montes.



## **Annual Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll**

*by Margaret Belle Crow*

History comes alive in Maple Hill Cemetery as voices of Huntsville's most illustrious and fascinating residents tell their life stories. More than fifty Huntsville residents, in period costume, will represent notables from our past, most of whom are buried at Maple Hill. The delightful personalities on Sunday's stroll will include five Alabama governors, the president of Studebaker Automobile Company, and Tallulah Bankhead (visiting her mother's grave).

Here are a few of the people whom Cemetery "Strollers" will meet.



*Jane Brahan Patton, wife of Alabama's twentieth governor, Robert Miller Patton (1865-1868), portrayed by Kay Cornelius. The Pattons' sons, who died fighting for the Confederacy, are buried nearby. William was killed at the Battle of Shiloh in 1863, and Robert was killed at the Battle of Selma in 1865. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*



*Clement Comer Clay, Alabama's eighth governor (1835-1837), portrayed by Andy Watson. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*

*Colonel Egbert J. Jones, Fourth Alabama Infantry Regiment, C.S.A., portrayed by Rick Creacy in front of the Confederate monument and the burial ground of nearly 200 Confederate soldiers. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*



*Maria Howard Weeden, poet and artist, portrayed by Linda Wright Riley. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*



*Madam Mollie Teal, one of Huntsville's most colorful businesswomen, portrayed by Leslie Rhett Crosby. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*

*Monument maker A.A. Baker and his wife, portrayed by descendants Sarah Huff Fisk and Kerry Pinkerton, who pose before a Baker monument in their family plot. Baker Marble Yard produced many of the monuments in Maple Hill Cemetery. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*



*Revolutionary soldier Albert Russell, sr., portrayed by David Milam. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*



*Mark Hallman, as an infantryman, 4th Alabama Infantry Regiment, and his nephew Jake Woodall, as a waterboy with the 4th Alabama, near the Confederate burial ground, Maple Hill Cemetery. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*



*Film and stage actress Tallulah Bankhead, portrayed by Dorcas Harris as a visitor to her mother's grave. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*



*Surveyor Thomas Freeman, who established north Alabama's meridian, portrayed by Earl Mathews. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*

*Jacque Grey, at the Hundley family plot, Maple Hill Cemetery, ready to tell interesting tales about her Hundley relatives. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*



*Jane Hamilton Childs, Huntsville educator and Principal of Female Collegiate Institute (now Athens College), 1858-1869, portrayed by Phyllis O'Connell. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*



***“The Past Cries Out  
For Restoration!”***



## Maple Hill Restoration

by *Brenda Webb, Perky Taylor, and Margaret Belle Crow*  
Photographs by Margaret Belle Crow

The Huntsville Pilgrimage Association, in conjunction with the City of Huntsville, has undertaken a major restoration project at Maple Hill Cemetery. During the past three years, the combined effort has resulted in the repair and cleaning of more than 104 monuments and stones. This work has been accomplished by two dedicated craftsmen, Ray McDaniel and Skip Stinson.

The monuments chosen by the Pilgrimage Cemetery Committee and Maple Hill Cemetery manager Brenda Webb for repair and restoration were selected from a detailed inventory of those judged to be most dangerous to Cemetery visitors, as well as those that had been vandalized or had deteriorated from age and pollution.

Maple Hill Cemetery is looking better, but this is just a beginning of the restoration of this beautiful landmark, which is a valuable record of Huntsville and its development. Each year, more than two thousand Huntsville third-graders come to Maple Hill to study Huntsville's history. A major goal of the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association is to make Maple Hill Cemetery a safe environment for students to learn about and respect our shared past.

*Marker, Dr. Thomas Fearn plot, Maple Hill Cemetery, before repair and restoration. Age, weather and pollution resulted in the deterioration of this marker.*





*Marker, Dr. Thomas Fearn plot, Maple Hill Cemetery, during restoration. Skip Stinson, masonry contractor by profession, artisan by interest, uses his self-designed tripod with chain hoist for dismantling, repairing and reassembling monuments.*

*Marker, Coleman family plot, Maple Hill Cemetery before restoration. During the past three years, Skip Stinson has repaired more than seven crosses, several of which had been vandalized.*



*Marker, Daniel Coleman grave, Maple Hill Cemetery after restoration.*



*Ray McDaniel shown with a Before marker.*



*Markers in the Joseph Martin plot, Maple Hill Cemetery, after restoration*



*Mary Chambers Bibb, wife of William Bibb, portrayed by Marianne Anderson. Courtesy Cynthia Massey Parsons.*

## The 1835 Mary Bibb Mausoleum

*by Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A.*

In Huntsville's historic Maple Hill Cemetery sits a small jewel of 1835 Greek Revival architecture. It was designed by, and signed by, Huntsville's first and still finest architect, George Gilliam Steele. It is a diminutive Greek-temple-form structure of only 5 feet x 9 feet 6 inches in plan, built of carved limestone, with a gently sloped pedimental stone slab roof, corner pilasters with delicate "egg-and-dart" carved capitals and molded bases; all on a stone stylobate. The delicate molds are counterpointed by the expanses of smooth stone-slab walls. That Steele's name is engraved in tiny Roman letters, "Geo. Steele, Arch't," in the lower corner of the west wall, indicates his satisfaction with his classical design.

This handsome structure demonstrates that large size or great elaboration has nothing to do with the quality of a work of architecture. The Bibb mausoleum is small, simple, and beautiful. Its proportions are approximately those of a "quadruple cube," 5 feet x 9 feet 6 inches in plan, and 9 feet 6 inches high to the roof ridge.

This type of geometric proportioning has been the primary basis of setting architectural proportions since ancient Greece. In the middle ages, architects were called "geometricians." Geometry was used to set the design of buildings and their components, and "measurements" came only as a result of the initial geometry and subsequent artistic refinement.

This secret has been lost in the 20th century. Now buildings are typically set by measurements, with geometric proportioning as an afterthought, if considered at all. The proliferation of awkwardly proportioned modern buildings is the painful-to-the-eyes result of this "backwards approach" to proportioning.

By 1988, the Bibb mausoleum, then 153 years old, was in serious condition. Prolonged water penetration through the joints in the limestone roof slabs had caused freeze-spalling of the entablature stone. Considerable chunks of the architraves, taenia molds, frieze and cornice

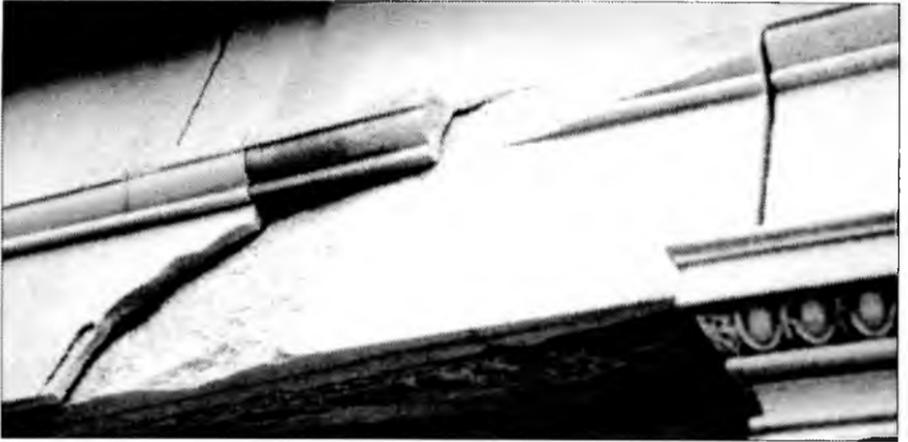
were fallen, and many freeze-cracks were present in the stonework. It was apparent that a two-step approach was needed to (1) restore the building and (2) prevent the recurrence of the water penetration through the roof slab joints that had caused the problem.

Since there is no type of caulking that will permanently seal joints in stone roof slabs, it was decided to cover the roof with an inconspicuous but highly durable material that needs no maintenance. The material used was flat, solid zinc sheets, which weather to a soft gray that is compatible with the warm gray limestone. The metal seams are flattened to further diminish its visual presence.

For the repair of the spalled and fractured carved limestone details, a material developed in Holland specifically for stone restoration was employed— “Jähn Stone Restoration Mortar.” This material contains no plastics, a very important characteristic and not the case with other such products. Its physical properties match that of the limestone and it can be modeled to recreate moldings of spalled areas. The finished results are excellent.

Nine years of planning, fund-raising, and restoration were required in the restoration of this beautiful structure. It was worth every minute of it. Most funding and much effort was supplied by the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association. Monetary contributions were also made by Bibb family members and the Historic Huntsville Foundation. The zinc roof was installed by Guenther Huber-Delle, a highly-skilled metalsmith, trained in Germany, who owns CopperWorks Co. in Decatur. The stone restoration was executed by “Jähn” trained craftsmen from Wasco of Nashville. Architectural work was donated over the nine year period by Jones & Herrin, Architects, of Huntsville, on behalf of the Historic Huntsville Foundation.

It would have been easy to let this diminutive work of architectural beauty continue to crumble into ruin. That it was restored and preserved is a credit to the conscientiousness of Huntsvillians, not only in conserving a memorial and burial site, but in saving a fine work of architecture that serves to remind us that restraint and beauty of proportion, not grandiose size and elaborateness, constitute architectural quality.



*Detail of Mary Bibb Mausoleum, Maple Hill Cemetery, before restoration.*  
Courtesy Margaret Belle Crow.



*Detail of Mary Bibb Mausoleum, Maple Hill Cemetery, after restoration. A craftsman from Wasco, Nashville, finishes the restoration of the damaged stone.*  
Courtesy Margaret Belle Crow.



*View of recently repaired early graves, looking from the Bibb Mausoleum towards Wells Avenue, Maple Hill Cemetery. Some of these graves may have prompted William H. Thomas's 1851 comment "It is pleasant to meditate among the tombs" (see page 39). Courtesy Margaret Belle Crow.*

## What's in a Tombstone?

*by Dorothy Scott Johnson*

When you enter a cemetery what do you see? Tombstones. And what is on those stones? Inscriptions? Anything else? Yes, often there is an epitaph and perhaps a lodge marker such as Eastern Star, DAR, Mason, Oddfellow, Links, etc., but what else? Have you ever wondered if the shape of the tombstone had any significance? Or if the ivy twining around a stone in bas-relief had a special meaning?

Fashions in tombstones change just like fashions in clothes, although not so rapidly. For instance, it is rare to find a box tomb, a rectangular stone box with the inscription on the lid, dated after the Civil War. A box tomb is believed to have discouraged predators from digging up the bodies when the country was still a frontier. As the country became more settled other less cumbersome markers came into favor such as table tombs. The table tomb, a slab mounted on four legs that looks like a table, "went out" about the same time as the box tomb. Many samples of these markers can be seen in Block 1 of Maple Hill.

Many of the most common tombstone shapes and decorations are found in one form or another in Maple Hill Cemetery. Their meanings may surprise you. Much of the following information has been adapted from *Memorial Symbols*, published by the Georgia Marble Company of Tate, Georgia. Our thanks to William L. "Billy" Sparkman of Sparkman Marble and Granite Works for allowing us to study his copy of this helpful booklet, and for providing other information.

### *Woodmen of the World Memorial Stones*

Many of us have marveled at the beauty of the Woodmen of the World tombstones but few of us are aware of the story behind them or of the talent and hard work that went into their making. All are works of art and some are masterpieces.

These stones were made almost entirely by hand with a hammer and sharp chisel. These markers are no longer produced because of the high cost of labor and the lack of artisans capable of hand-shaping the stones. Making tombstones by hand is a lost art; if ever tombstones should be preserved, these should.

Woodmen of the World, an insurance company still in existence today, has changed with the times and no longer provides exquisite hand-wrought memorial markers. At one time it was not only an insurance company but a social organization to which many of our prominent citizens belonged, as can be attested by the number and variety of these stones in Maple Hill.

Woodmen of the World held picnics, meetings and parties. When a member died, the whole group came to the cemetery and participated in a formal ceremony much as the American Legion and Masons do today. In one symbolic part of the ceremony, a caged dove was released and rose to Heaven, representing the spirit of the deceased.

In Huntsville, doves were not easily available and pigeons were used. Mr. LaMont Sparkman of Sparkman Marble and Granite Works started raising pigeons for that very purpose. They were homing pigeons; the pigeon released at any given funeral would be home long before Mr. Sparkman.

### *Beauty and Symbolism*

“Beautiful memorials speak an everlasting and universal language, alleviating the pain and sadness of death and magnifying the powers of life.”<sup>1</sup>

Certain words, chosen for their beauty of sound and meaning, are associated with certain shapes or styles of tombstone. There are many examples of each type in Maple Hill, but only a few are given on the following pages.

---

<sup>1</sup> Anonymous, *Memorial Symbols* (p.5, n.d.), Georgia Marble Company, Tate, Georgia.

**VIRTUE.** *Stele or vertical tablet.* The marker of Martha A. Halsey (1824–1867) in Block 5 is a classic example.



**FAITH.** *Cross.* Classic examples are the stones of Albert E. Matthews (1865–1907) and May Violet Matthews (1906–1907) in Block 21.

**HEAVEN.** (Eternal Life.) *Obelisk or shaft.* Examples in Block D are the stones of C. S. McCalley and Rev. John H. Bryson (1831–1897).



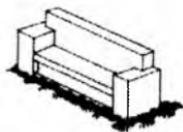
**PURITY.** *Urn or vase.* A draped urn tops the obelisk of James Bradley (1794–1845) in Block 6. An undraped urn tops the tall shaft marker of Dr. David Moore (1787–1845) in Block 5.

**JOY.** *Column or architectural type.* The Beasley marker in Block 15 is an example, as is the stone of Mary E. Wright and Margaret C. Moore in Block 4. Their stone is more ornate, topped with urns which in turn are topped with a dove.



**MODESTY.** *Horizontal tablet.* This type of marker is becoming more popular and is usually found in polished granite. A classic example is the Martison-Barnes plot marker in Block 15.

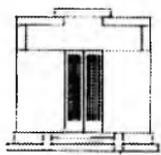
**ELOQUENCE** *Exedra or seat.* An elegant expanded version of this is the Thompson plot marker in Block 11 on which the name of Kathleen Dement Thompson (1842–1908) is engraved. It beckons one to rest in its serenity.



**VALOR.** *Grave ledger.* In Block 10 the markers of Henrietta Kuttner Alexander (1868–1943) and Charles Alexander (1868–1933) are classic examples. Two other modern examples are those of Margaret Sparkman (1908–1970) and Ward Fern Sparkman (1902–1971). They are next to David Thomas Caldwell who died in 1834, not yet a year old. These are in Block 2.

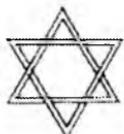


**LOVE.** *Tables with vases.* The exquisite stone of R. H. Leo (1932–1984) in Block 13 has tastefully carved roses draping over one edge of the stone in bas-relief.



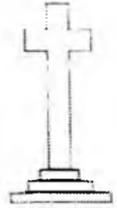
**HOPE.** *Mausoleum or tomb.* A classic example of this type is the John Robinson mausoleum in Block 26. Two bales of cotton are carved at the peak of the tomb over the door of the Robinson tomb, reflecting Mr. Robinson's activity as a cotton broker.

**MOSAID.** *Decalogue.* This monument type represents a tablet on which Moses was given the ten commandments. There are countless stones in Maple Hill in this shape. It was quite popular around the turn of the century.



**STAR OF DAVID.** *Divine protection.* Two beautiful stones topped with the Star of David are on the graves of Jacob Bernstein (1884–1924) and Hilda Bernstein (1916–1934) in Block 10.

**LATIN CROSS.** This cross is generally and universally accepted as the Christian symbol. Three bases commonly used symbolize Faith, Hope, and Charity. The marker of Jane McDavid (1865–1866) in Block 7 is a good example. This marker has ivy wrapped around the stone in bas-relief.



**CELTIC CROSS.** This is sometimes referred to as the Cross of Iona since the style originated in Iona, Scotland, and symbolizes not only faith but atonement and regeneration. The nimbus (wheel) usually symbolizes divinity; on most Celtic crosses, divinity is also represented by a sacred monogram. The plot marker of LeRoy Pope Walker in Block 5 is the only true classic example of the Celtic Cross in Maple Hill Cemetery. (See photo page 37.)

**CRUSADERS CROSS.** This is the cross of the Episcopal Church. It is called the Crusaders Cross because it was the most common form of cross adorning the shields of the English soldiers in the Crusades. In fact, it was their means of identification. Examples of this cross mark the graves of Reuben Chapman (1858–1891. Son of Gov. Chapman) and his wife Rosalie Sheffey Chapman (1860–1917).



### *Sacred Monograms*



**CHI (X) RHO (P).** The most ancient of the symbols is the abbreviation of the Greek word, *Xpictoc*, meaning Christ.

**IHC.** Not as ancient as the Chi Rho, but more commonly used, this is the abbreviation for the Greek work *Ihcoyo*, meaning Jesus.



IHS. Originally IHC, this monogram became IHS in the 15th century when an eccentric monk wandered about carrying a banner on which he had painted the words *Jesus hominum salvator*, which means “Jesus, Saviour of Mankind.” This so completely captured the imagination of the people that they accepted the symbols IHS, if not the translation. The small cross bar in the stem of the H denotes an abbreviation but is not commonly used. A beautiful example of the IHS monogram is on the Bradley cross plot marker in Block 15.



### *Symbols*

Memorial symbolism is expressed by ornament to a great extent. Flowers, trees, plants, inanimate items etc., are commonly used as memorial ornamentation.

- Anchor—Hope
- Angel—Messenger of God to man
- Banner—Triumph
- Bell—Invitation, exorcism
- Bible—Word of God—Divine Authority; closed Bible means concealed from man; open Bible means perfect knowledge.
- Birds—Human souls
- Calla Lily—Sympathy
- Cedar tree—Prosperity, long life
- Circle—Eternity, completeness
- Column (broken)—Symbol of death
- Crocus—Youthfulness
- Crown—Reward, honor
- Dolphin—Love
- Dove—Spirit of God, purity, peace
- Evergreen—Immortality of the Soul
- Eye—Omniscience of God
- Fleur-de-Lis—Purity, Holy Trinity
- Grape—Religious truths
- Hand—The hand of God
- Hands clasped—Fellowship
- Harp—Joy, music
- Heart—Piety, love

- Ivy—Immortality, light, knowledge
- Lily of the valley—Humility
- Morning Glory—Resurrection, dawn
- Oak—Strength, honor
- Rainbow—Promise of eternity
- Rising Sun—Dawn of new life
- Rose—Love, beauty, perfection
- Scroll—Fear of God, wisdom; scroll with pen means literature, knowledge; scroll with harp means music
- Shamrock—The Holy Trinity
- Sheep—Christians
- Shell—Holy baptism
- Shield—Protection, valor
- Sword—Power, Justice, Authority
- Thistle—Austerity, independence
- Torch—Zeal
- Urn, draped—Sorrow
- Violet—Modesty
- Wheat—The Bread of Life

*Celtic cross marker, LeRoy Pope Walker, Block 5, Maple Hill Cemetery. Courtesy Ann Montes.*





*R.L. Sparkman, his wife Lillie and their son LaMont before their home and shop, corner of California and Wells Avenue. Courtesy William L. "Billy" Sparkman.*

In the window is the beautiful hand-carved maiden that was later purchased and placed above the grave of Louisa Richie (January 10, 1851-January 16, 1914), Block B. R.L. Sparkman was the son of J. Reed Sparkman, founder of Sparkman Marble and Granite Works, now operated by the fourth and fifth generations, William L. "Billy" Sparkman, and his son William L. "Monte" Sparkman, jr. Note the three-rail fence around Maple Hill Cemetery in the background. This fence replaced a six-rail wooden fence and was replaced by the present stone fence.

*Maiden monument above grave of Louisa Richie, Block B, Maple Hill Cemetery. Courtesy Ann Montes.*



## **“Mementoes of Affection”: A Lost Daguerreotype of Maple Hill Cemetery**

*by Frances Osborn Robb*

On June 17, 1851, daguerreotypist William H. Thomas advertised in *Southern Advocate*:

I wish to have in my Gallery every thing that is useful and interesting. I propose on Friday the 20th, at 7 p.m. to take a Panoramic view of the Huntsville cemetery, and those splendid monuments. I will be pleased to see many of the friends and relations near the Mementoes of affection; meet me there. It is pleasant to meditate among the Tombs.

Thomas' lost view may have emulated award-winning panoramas like the 1878 daguerreotype series depicting the waterfront at Cincinnati, a significant wholesale center for the Tennessee Valley. The cemetery's memorial associations may have influenced Thomas' choice of site: an 1851 advertisement suggested that portrait sitters “please retain that good and pleasant expression which is caused by the thought of blest immortality living after Death.”

Artist/daguerrean Thomas came to Huntsville in 1850 from Columbia, Tennessee. He opened Daguerrean Art Gallery on the southeast corner of the public square (possibly on the site of the Historic Huntsville Foundation's newly acquired Hundley building), where he installed a skylight—Huntsville's first. He relocated to Tuscumbia in 1852.

Little is known of Thomas. Nevertheless, his unusually informative advertisements sum up the impulses that drove the most adventurous 1850s daguerreans: the search for novelties to elicit admiration and custom, the urge to equal great daguerrean achievements and the bitter-sweet pleasure of memorializing the dead.

Thomas' panorama may have comprised a single daguerreotype or a series of several images taken from left to right across the cemetery. Today, his cemetery view may be tucked away in a box or chest of drawers, forgotten and awaiting rediscovery.



*The McGee Monument, Maple Hill Cemetery, was erected by Mollie McGee, in honor of her father, hotel proprietor Henry McGee. Courtesy Ann Montes.*

## LADIES TRESSES

by Margaret J. Vann

Small white blossoms spiral down a green stalk, virginal plaits that gleam in the afternoon sun. Named ladies tresses, the orchids live in shaded acid soil. Roaming through a country cemetery on a genial fall day, I found the orchids.

We had gone to clean grandmother's grave:  
duty-bound, we took our rakes, shovels, and shears.  
Rebecca and I left the others working.

We walked and read:  
*Jesus gathered her in His arms  
she rests in the bosom of Abraham*

Rebecca cried over the children.  
She stood alive in the autumn sun shedding tears for the little lambs:  
*Dear Willie*

I said:  
*See this stone: the gates of heaven are carved on it.*

She said:  
*The baby lived just one day.*

We walked and read:  
*He is not gone just sleeping*

I said:  
*Look, cairns, animals have denned here.*

She said:  
*They died so young.*

We walked and read as the others cut and ranked and filled the sunken graves:  
*Our precious babies*  
Rebecca knelt to read the dates of the sisters.

I gasped:

*Ladies tresses; look, orchids growing wild—  
orchids for my garden*

She would not let me dig the babies' flowers for my garden.

We walked and read  
while others raked and trimmed.

## PUBLICATIONS TO ORDER

<b>NO.</b>		<b>COST</b>
_____	<p>“Photographic Memories: A Scrapbook of Huntsville and Madison County Alabama”                      Black and white photographs depicting Huntsville and Madison County, 1860’s to the present.                      Compiled by Elise H. Stephens</p>	10.75
_____	<p>Cease Not To Think Of Me, ed. by Patricia Ryan                      The Steele Family letters from settlement through Civil War, a rare source of social history spiced with local gossip.</p>	8.50
_____	<p>Changing Huntsville 1890 - 1899                      Elizabeth Humes Chapman’s wonderful romp through Huntsville’s last decade of the 19th Century.</p>	14.98
_____	<p>America Restored                      Contains 319 full color pages with photographs by Carol Highsmith. Published by The Preservation Press of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.                      (Cost includes Postage and Handling)</p>	53.50
_____	<p>Historic America                      The National Trust’s Historic America 1995 Engagement Calendar. Full-color images from America Restored representing the gamut of restoration projects.</p>	12.95

(Please Include \$2.00 for Postage and Handling)

**HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION, INC.**  
 P.O. Box 786  
 Huntsville, Alabama 35804

---

---

**Historic Huntsville Foundation, Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 786**  
**Huntsville, Alabama 35804**

- Individual & Family, \$25  
 Patron, \$35 to \$99  
 Benefactor, \$100 and up  
 Business, \$50  
 Organization, \$25  
 Senior (65 and over)  
for Individual & Family Categories \$20

To become a member, please check desired category. All contributions are tax deductible.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I am interested in volunteering for a  
Historic 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.

*Fennell family marker, Roman Catholic plot, Maple Hill Cemetery. The marker reads: "Julien Merle Fennell, son of Chas. M. & Susie H. Fennell. Died Nov. 9, 1887 Aged 3 yrs., 11 mo's & 22 D's. His dying words were: 'Mamma, please tell them to come down' and the beautiful angels of his vision descended and carried Julien to a brighter home."* Courtesy Margaret Belle Crow



PRINTING  
THE TENNESSEE VALLEY PRESS, INC.

LAYOUT & TYPING  
Jean Hall Dwyer

from

Historic Huntsville Foundation, Inc.  
P.O. Box 786  
Huntsville, Alabama 35804

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
PERMIT #34  
Huntsville, AL