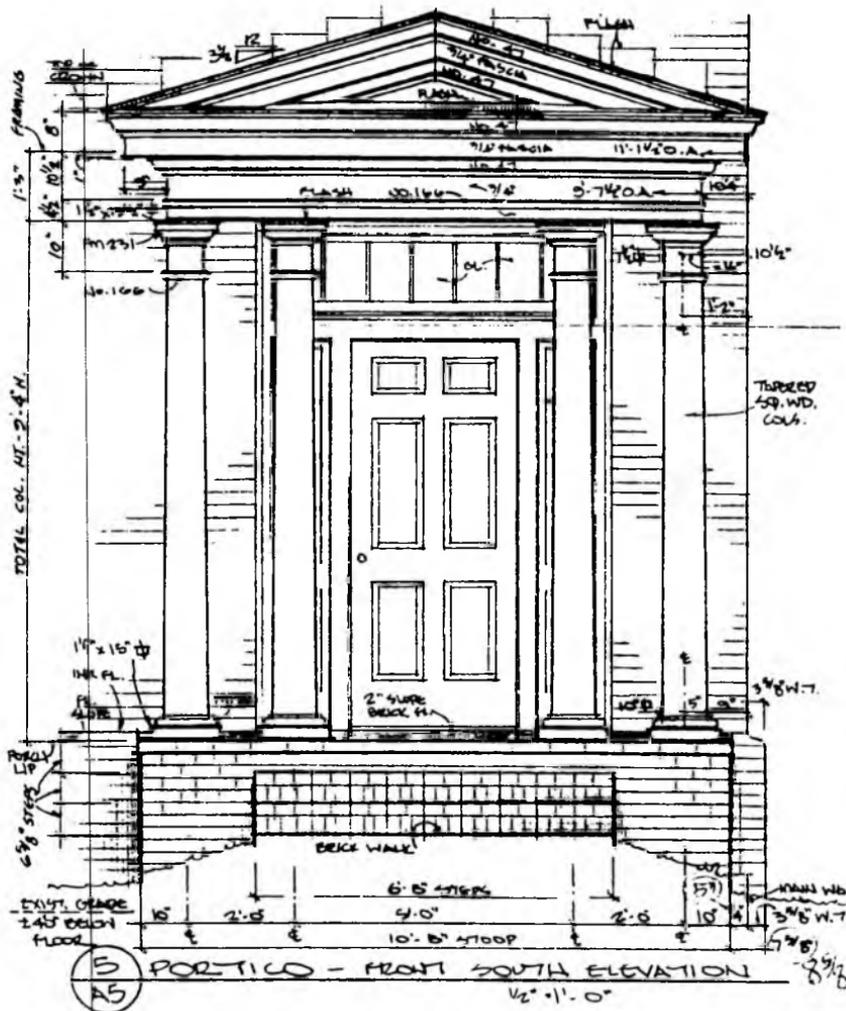


THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE QUARTERLY OF LOCAL ARCHITECTURE AND PRESERVATION



HARVIE P. JONES, FAIA, RETROSPECTIVE

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Founded 1974

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of Local Architecture and Preservation**

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Table of Contents

From the Editor: Margaret J. Vann	2
<i>Introduction to the Man</i>	3
Diane Ellis, executive director HHF	
<i>Harvie P Jones' Contributions to Preservation</i>	6
David Bowman	
<i>Remembering Harvie</i>	9
Christine Richard, John Shaver	
<i>Federal Period (Introduction)</i>	10
<i>Federal Period Residential Architecture</i>	12
Harvie P. Jones, FAIA	
<i>The Maria Howard Weeden House (Introduction)</i>	34
<i>The Structure</i>	35
Harvie P. Jones, FAIA	
<i>Remembering Harvie</i>	49
David E. Potts, Dot Johnson, Kelly Cooper Schrimsher	
<i>Interviews with Billy Herrin and Harvilee Harbarger</i>	50
Maureen F. Drost	
<i>Remembering Harvie</i>	53
Dale Rhoades	
<i>Working with Harvie P. Jones</i>	54
David Hay	
<i>Constitution Hall Park (Introduction)</i>	55
<i>Constitution Hall Park: Architectural Notes</i>	57
Harvie P. Jones, FAIA	
<i>Tribute to Harvie P. Jones</i>	70
Faye A. Axford, curator Donnell House, Athens	
<i>Remembering Harvie</i>	71
Frances and David Robb	

From the Editor

This double issue of the Historic Huntsville *Quarterly* is devoted to some of the preservation contributions of Harvie P. Jones. I have enjoyed getting to know Harvie through his articles and through the eyes of his friends. Frances and David Robb contributed the introductions to Harvie's articles; Faye A. Axford, David Bowman, Maureen Drost, Diane Ellis, David Hay, and John Shaver have contributed letters, memories, and interviews. With Lynn Jones' permission, the *Quarterly* includes comments from condolence letters to Lynn. Friends have contributed anecdotes about Harvie and their work with him. The whole experience of compiling this issue has evoked bittersweet feelings in me.

Choosing which articles to use was difficult, but this *Quarterly* will feature Harvie's three earliest articles. Some of the articles are facsimiles (with original page numbers evident) and others are reset. The Fall/Winter, 1999, issue will include material through 1990 as well as a letter Harvie wrote to Bob Gamble on one of Harvie's techniques of saving old structures.

Already Harvie is missed; things move slower without his encyclopedic memory. He knew everything from how to date a log house (I spent a delightful day in Harvie's company dating a log house and then touring east Limestone County looking at various log houses—all of his time donated) to how to mix period mortar. We no longer have that resource. If any question arose, it was "Ask Harvie, he'll know." Now we can't ask Harvie.

Harvie gave much to preservation in Huntsville and north Alabama. His gift is priceless, and the community is left with a void impossible to fill. But we can continue in Harvie's love: preservation. With your help, we can preserve sites and structures and save the freight depot (one of his last projects). The process is on-going; and as long as we continue to preserve, we honor our friend Harvie.

Margaret J. Vann

Introduction to the Man: Harvie P. Jones

Diane Ellis, executive director

“If you would see the man’s monument, look around.”
inscription in St. Paul’s Cathedral honoring Christopher Wren

Harvie P. Jones was born in Huntsville, Alabama, on June 9, 1930, a son of Howard Criner and Kathleen (Paul) Jones. He grew up in New Market, graduated from New Market High School, and then earned a BS Degree (1952) and a BArch Degree (1953) from Georgia Institute of Technology. After serving in France and the United States (1953-1955) as a second lieutenant in the army, Harvie returned to Huntsville in 1955 to begin his career, working as an architectural designer at G.W. Jones & Sons, Engineers.

In 1957, Harvie joined W.R. Dickson, Architect. He became a partner in Dickson, Jones & Davis, Architects, in 1964. In 1967, he and Billy Herrin formed Jones & Herrin Architects/Interior Design. Harvie retired from the firm in 1998.

Elected to the American Institute of Architects’ College of Fellows in 1981, Harvie’s contributions to the profession and to historic preservation extended beyond local and state boundaries. He worked on more than 600 preservation projects in the Southeast. He authored numerous articles on historic architecture and preservation, served on many professional and civic boards and organizations, and, in turn, was recognized for his achievements and influence with dozens of awards.

Harvie served on the editorial board of *Alabama Heritage* magazine and contributed articles to the National Trust’s Preservation News and to the international *Bulletin* of the Association for Preservation Technology. A 1979 issue of the *Bulletin* featured a cover article written by Harvie about the technique he had developed for using computers to enhance historic photographs in order to glean lost details of historic structures.

Harvie was a member of the Huntsville Historic Preservation Commission from its establishment in 1972 until his death. He served on the Huntsville Beautification Board, and he chaired or was a member of many civic groups and boards, including the Central City Association, the Beautification

Board, the Twickenham Historic Preservation District Association, the Arts Council, the Huntsville Art League and Museum Association, the Wheeler Plantation board, and Burritt Museum & Park boards.

Harvie contributed to scores of restoration projects outside Huntsville, including the Carnegie Library at Judson College, the Donnell House in Athens, Belle Mont in Tuscumbia, and Albertville's railroad depot, as well as many projects in Savannah.

His awards include many honors from the American Institute of Architects, the North Alabama Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Historic Savannah Foundation, The Beehive Press, the City of Huntsville, the Alabama Historical Commission, the Alabama Preservation Alliance, and the State of Alabama. He received Huntsville's Virginia Hammill Simms Award in 1972 for his comprehensive work in the arts.

Harvie has been Historic Huntsville Foundation's guiding spirit since the organization was formed in 1974 with Harvie serving as its founding chairman. Not a day has passed since then without his influence being felt in every area of the Foundation's operations. He was the Foundation's teacher and best friend, a resource of inestimable value.

Harvie possessed more knowledge and understanding of historic buildings and communities than one would imagine could be contained in the head and heart of one human being. He showed us the cultural and economic virtues of restoring and preserving and taught us to see the treasures in our own backyard and to respect them. And, perhaps more than any other person, he influenced the look of the city where we live. Without Harvie there might have been no historic downtown business district. No Twickenham Historic District. No Old Town Historic District. No beautifully restored Weeden House. No Alabama Constitution Village. No historic Huntsville passenger depot. These gifts are a sampling of the architectural legacy Harvie left to the community.

Harvie's passion for preservation and his legendary generosity led him to donate plans and give freely of his time and talent to hundreds of projects. Over and over again, he donated plans for projects large and small in the name of Historic Huntsville Foundation, thereby strengthening our presence in the community and keeping us focused on our mission. More than once he stepped in at the 11th hour to save a building scheduled for the

wrecking ball. No rescue is more emblematic of Harvie's genius and generosity in this regard than that of Oak Place, the circa 1840 George Steele house on Maysville Road. Nancy Van Valkenburgh was chairman of the Foundation at the time of this intervention. She learned that East Huntsville Baptist Church, owners of the Steele house, had concluded that the building could not meet the church's needs and would have to be torn down and replaced by a new structure. She asked the church's three-member building committee to postpone the demolition until she and Harvie could meet with them. When they met, the building committee listed everything the church needed and explained why the current building wouldn't work. "Well, could you give me a little time to come up with some plans?" Harvie asked. The committee said he could have the weekend. It happened to be Thanksgiving.

Harvie worked on the project over the holiday weekend; a few days later he met with the church committee members and unveiled his drawings. His plans for the building were, in Nancy's words, "breathtaking." All the church's needs had been met exactly in his designs. When he talked about the experience of working on the plans, Harvie said: "It was like a hand was guiding me." The building committee presented Harvie's plans to the congregation; the congregation approved them, and Oak Place was saved.

Harvie died December 5, 1998. He was a man of integrity, free of pretense, a good citizen. The next-to-the-last time I saw him was at a meeting in the Historic Huntsville Foundation office downtown. When the meeting was over, he left the building by the side door. I watched him go, then saw him stop in the middle of Franklin Street, bend down, and—in a gesture familiar to so many of us in Huntsville—pick up some discarded litter to toss into the nearest trash can. Sometimes the simple lessons of great teachers are the most powerful.



“A building of any period, old and recent, deserves to keep its own character.”

Harvie P. Jones, FAIA
Building Progress, 1977

Harvie P. Jones' Contributions to Preservation

David Bowman

Memory fails as to exactly when I first encountered Harvie P. Jones. It may have been about 1986, when I went to the north Alabama railroaders group, out of frankest curiosity about what they were up to, as a just-hired reporter for the *Huntsville News*. Harvie turned up to give a riveting slide show on the state's notable railway station architecture. It was a project he had done some years before, for the Alabama contingent of the American Institute of Architects, but it had the secondary benefit of introducing me to exotic places like Dothan, Brewton, Lanett, Opelika, Gadsden, and Alexander City.

A year later I was in the early and messy stages of restoring an old farmhouse near Pulaski, Tennessee. I had stripped off the wallpaper from the 1820s log portion and discovered notching around the fireplace that indicated a much larger mantel had been there originally. Harvie rooted through his research files and found a set of photos and measured drawings of such a mantel that had been part of an 1820s farmhouse in the vicinity of Hazel Green.

Gradually, in subsequent years, I became aware of the contribution Harvie P. Jones had made all over Huntsville and Madison County: new works like the Huntsville/Madison County Public Library, lovingly known as Fort Book, a browse, borrow from, and grow-a-bit wiser library; the new/old Constitution Village, a faithful re-creation of Huntsville's townscape, circa 1819; the successful adaptive re-use of an old brick commercial building on Jefferson Street into the Jones & Herrin Architecture/Interior Design offices; major site-restoration projects like the Huntsville Depot, and an indeterminate but large number of old-house renovations in the Twickenham and Old Town areas of Huntsville and all over the counties of north Alabama; and what seemed like an indefatigable round of consultations, done pro bono, contributions freely offered for the good of the community.

Harvie's approach was a modest, low-key, solid presentation of the facts, usually followed by a thoughtful recommendation of the alternatives for action. By education and inclination, he was a thoroughgoing profes-

sional, both as an architect and architectural historian, but he was also the *complete* amateur, doing something literally for the love of it. One small example, out of hundreds others could cite, involved the house at 510 East Holmes that I worked on from July 1, 1995, to December 1996. (The full story of this experience is in my memoir, *A Live-In Deconstructionist*, published in the Historic Huntsville *Quarterly's* Fall 1998 issue.)

On or about April 1, 1995, Harvie had studied the house at the request of its owner, Effie Cummings, and had come up with a conjectural sketch of what the front elevation may have looked like, before its front porch was enclosed with brick veneer and plywood for its use as a chiropractic clinic beginning in 1968. Sometimes, of course, such a sketch could be a small investment that would yield a major renovation project commission for the architect. Undoubtedly many people became his firm's clients that way. But I would bet Harvie did so many freebies for people, over the past 30 years or so, that if everyone who benefited from his sage counsel donated the value of such professional services as checks to the Historic Huntsville Foundation, the cost of renovating its new headquarters would probably be in the bank right now.

Anyway, for my "before renovation" party at 510 East Holmes, I had removed the green wall-to-wall carpet from the oldest two rooms, enabling Harvie and others to see the six-inch-wide flooring. From this and a few other clues, accompanied by Linda Allen's public records documentation on the site, he was able to determine that the original Greek *T* portion dated back to circa 1859, despite Craftsman Style remodeling (larger windows on the front, a double-wide front porch, with exposed rafters and knee-braces under the eaves) that was done to make it a thoroughly modern residence circa 1915. Towards the end of the "before renovation" party, Harvie and I ceremonially removed the Astroturf carpeting from the front porch steps, to wild and raucous applause.

Another ceremonial moment I cherish with equal pleasure was the "mortgage-burning" party out on the back porch of my Tennessee farmhouse in the spring of 1993 with Lynn and Harvie Jones among the honored guests. A snapshot survives somewhere showing the moment of sheer panic in my face as the flames of the document are licking my fingertips.

I need to wrap up this contribution to Historic Huntsville *Quarterly's Festschrift* issue with a darker sentiment that concerns the old Memphis & Charleston Railroad freight depot, a building Harvie was still agonizing over, in the final years of his life. As a preservationist who co-founded Memphis Heritage, in 1975, I have compiled a track record with lots of losses and only a few wins. Our group formed up in the mid-1970s when Memphis' downtown was dying and its old buildings were being abandoned.

The Memphis Housing Authority, charged with implementing the city's urban renewal program, had already created and claimed acres of architectural roadkill. One of the most tragic losses was the Memphis & Charleston Depot; built circa 1857 and demolished in 1967, while the City Council was fiddling with the issue. This loss galvanized the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities chapter there to save a fine group of Gilded Age mansions along Adams Avenue for what is now called Victorian Village.

Anyway, what Memphis lost Huntsville won, thanks to Harvie P. Jones and others' efforts, renovating the circa 1860 Huntsville Depot, at roughly the same time many of us all over America began understanding historic preservation as a categorical imperative for the future. The missing part of that important project has been the Memphis & Charleston Railroad freight depot, whose roof was recently stripped off, opening the structural members underneath to certain ruination. I can recall Harvie Jones trying to reassure me that the Historic Huntsville Foundation, the City of Huntsville, and the Norfolk Southern owners would do the right thing, to save the oldest continuously operated freight depot in the United States.

The point is that for every win by preservationists—every Harrison Brothers Hardware, every Huntsville Depot, every George Steele Federal Period house restoration, and so on—there would be for Harvie P. Jones and idealists like him the battles that would be won instead by civic neglect and the natural forces of bio-entropic decay. It may be that the freight depot is already lost. If it's not too late, this is one we should win for the Gipper, or rather for that mild-mannered hero, that exceedingly civilized man, who gave so much to us all, Harvie P. Jones.

David Bowman was editorial page editor of the Huntsville News, 1986-1996; he continues to write commentary columns for several Arkansas newspapers, including the Baxter Bulletin (Mountain Home) and the Morning News of Northwest Arkansas (Springdale). Fall of 1999, he will be teaching a course, Writing About Architecture, at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. His preservation interests in the Ozarks include stone houses crafted from the 1880s to the 1930s, the 1930 rainbow arch bridge over the White River at Cotter, and some aging masterworks of Arkansas' two greatest architects, Fay Jones and Edward Durrell Stone.



Remembering Harvie

Evidence of a great legacy is everywhere you look in our community. Harvie's absence will be felt as strongly as his presence. The man made a difference!

Christine Richard, Huntsville

Walking. That's how I remember Harvie. Always walking. Walking to work, head down, as if he were looking for something.

Walking the streets of downtown Huntsville with his trusty camera, no detail unimportant. Walking the grounds of General Wheeler's plantation or walking the campus of Judson College. Walking with Lynn and Palladio in Rome, with Christopher Wren in London, with Louis Sullivan in Chicago, and with William Jay in Savannah.

When not walking, Harvie would allow himself a stroll, whether in Maple Hill Cemetery (as concerned with monuments as with mansions) or in his beloved New Market (preserving whole communities in his spare time).

Walking. That's how I remember Harvie. Always walking. Walking to work, head down, as if he were looking for something; not looking back, knowing that he has done well preserving that which is worthy of preservation; not looking forward, entrusting the future to friends and colleagues; but looking down, assuring himself that he would leave a legacy of healthy roots and firm foundations.

John Shaver, Huntsville

Federal Period

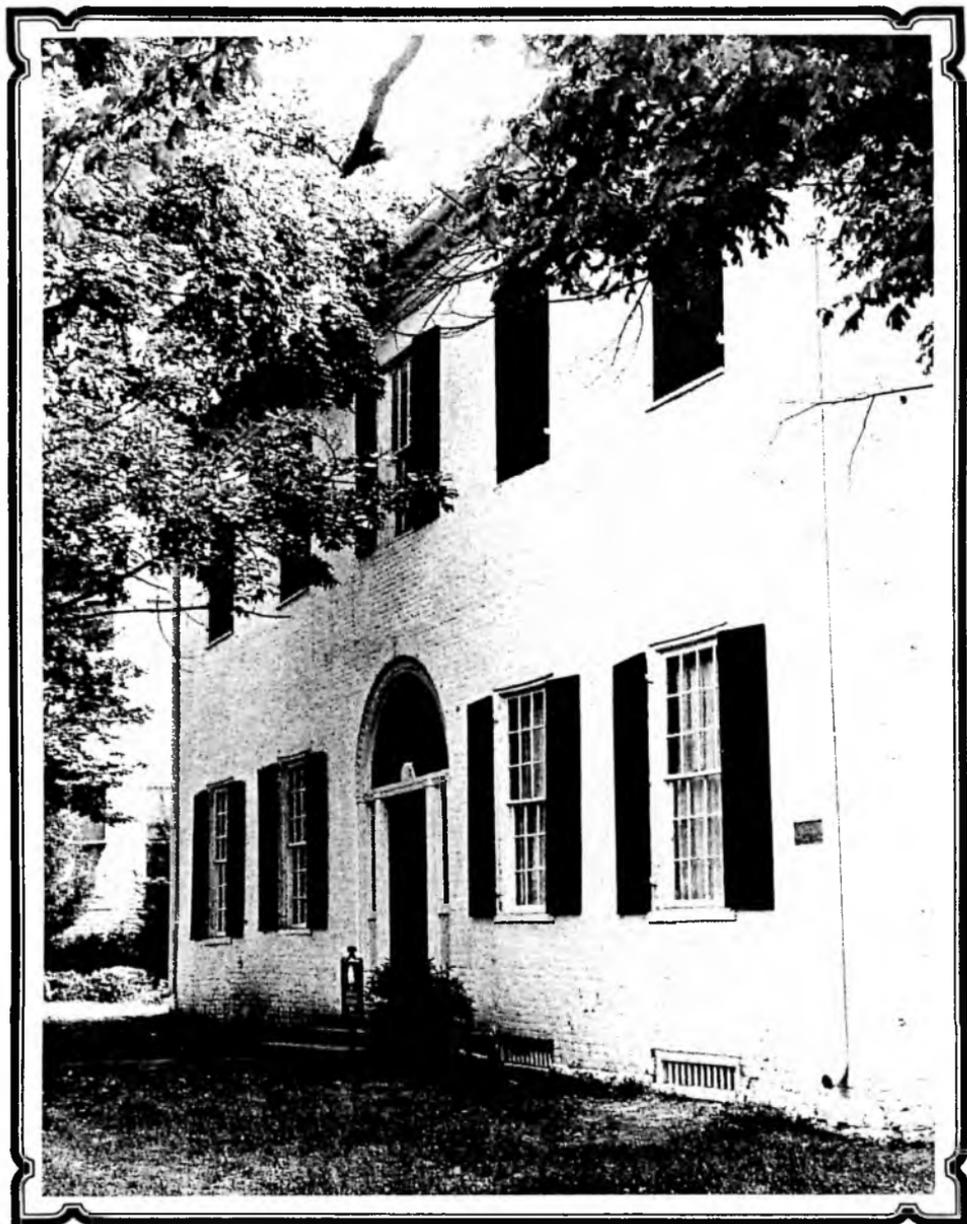
Introduction

Huntsville's connection to the major architectural styles of Western Europe begins with the Federal style, a complex blend of Roman and Greek influences filtered through the sensibility of English architects and patrons. Harvie P. Jones' essay on Federal Period residential architecture in Huntsville and Madison County carefully reviews the features of that style as found in local buildings (*Historic Huntsville Quarterly*, Vol. VII, No. 1, Fall, 1980).

Today's readers can attain a better understanding of the historical context of the Federal style and the discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum that enriched it. In Harvie's article they will find an exceptionally knowledgeable guide to the location of details and stylistic features in buildings that are still standing, waiting for a sympathetic eye.

This first study of our region's Federal architectural heritage comes complete with a list of cited buildings and a brief bibliography. It is carefully organized by categories: porches, floors, windows, wood components, etc., but it is also full of precise and sometimes very personal observations. Harvie enlivens his analysis of Federal-style plans with comments on the multiple functions of 19th century rooms: the parlor might be used for dining and sleeping, and several children might sleep in a single room. He explains how two-story brick houses acted as passive thermal systems, helping occupants cool off in summer-time.

Harvie points out that in the 19th century, a knowledge of architecture was considered to be an integral part of a good education. We who produce *Huntsville Huntsville Quarterly* heartily agree, and hope that this reprint will refresh some memories and help others begin an interesting exploration of preservation basics.



WEEDEN House, 300 Gates Street; entry featured on COVER.

by Harvie Jones

FEDERAL PERIOD

RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The style termed "Federal" has also been called "Adam" and, in England, "Anglo-Greco-Roman." "Neoclassic" is the term which might most accurately describe the essence of the American synthesis of the style, with emphasis on the influence of ancient Roman decorative devices as uncovered and recorded at Spalato, Pompeii and Herculaneum in the mid-18th century. Architectural handbooks of the early 19th century routinely began with archaeologically correct details of the classical Greek and Roman orders, and then progressed to improvise on and adapt ancient urns, swags, molds, and floral designs to the needs and tastes of the early 1800s. The primary interpreter of that

taste in the latter part of the 18th century was the English architect Robert Adam.

The United States has few full-blown examples of the flamboyant Adam style such as Boscobel, an 1805 confection of swags and balustrades on the Hudson River. In Madison County, the Adamesque exuberance is confined to the mantels and stairs primarily, and sometimes is found on the entry and, in the case of the 1819 Weeden House, on the baseboards and trim of interiors. The basic shape of the Federal period houses here is simple and restrained, with the Adamesque ornament applied on selected parts to the degree that economics and the owner's taste decreed.

In Huntsville and Madison County

1805 - 1835

*BOSCOBEL, Garrison, New York,
1805-1807.*



The Federal period of American architecture is generally considered to extend from the Revolutionary War to the Greek Revival, which began in the 1820s on the stylistically advanced eastern seaboard and about a decade later in remote Huntsville. Therefore Huntsville's Federal period began with the town's settlement in 1805 and extended generally to 1835.

As in all forms of art and technology, architectural periods have considerable overlap, and there are several houses here of the 1840s and 50s that are still Federal in character, except with up-to-date Greek Revival trim, mantels and porches, such as the ca. 1855 Dill-Rice House.

This stylistic overlap also extends backward toward the 18th century Georgian period. An examination of the vernacular Georgian house (not the high-style Palladian examples)

HUNTSVILLE HOUSES CITED

- | | |
|---|--|
| *BONE-WILBOURN House
1162 Hurricane Creek Road
Hurricane Valley | PHELPS-JONES House
6112 Pulaski Pike |
| BRICKELL House
614 Franklin Street | *POPE House (Echols Hill)
403 Echols Avenue |
| CABANISS-ROBERTS House
603 Randolph Street | PUBLIC INN
205 Williams Avenue |
| CLEMENS House
219 West Clinton Avenue | RHETT House
621 Franklin Street |
| COX-HILSON House
311 Lincoln Street | *SHEPHERD House
505 Holmes Street |
| DILL-RICE House
118 Calhoun Street | *SPRAGUE-CHADWICK House
307 Randolph Street |
| *FEENEY-BARBER House
414 Randolph Street | STEELE-COONS House
519 Randolph Street |
| *GROVE-BASSETT House
600 Franklin Street | *WEEDEN House
300 Gates Avenue |
| LEWIS-SANFORD House
601 Madison Street | *WINSTON-ORGAIN House
401 Lincoln Street |
| *Illustrated | YEATMAN-BECK House
528 Adams Avenue |



BASSETT HALL, Williamsburg, Virginia, ca. 1760.

of mid-18th century Virginia reveals that the major difference between vernacular Georgian and vernacular Federal is in decorative features, with the basic building forms being very similar (Bassett Hall). The major reasons for the retention of these basic forms from the mid-18th to the mid-19th century are that they were practical, functional, familiar and attractive--good reasons, indeed.

Probably the major characteristics of Federal period architecture are the lightness and delicacy of the Adamesque decorative detail. By comparison, Georgian interior decorative trim, while equally elaborate, is much heavier in scale, possibly because it was patterned on exterior Roman ornament. The Greek Revival detail is simpler but is (appropriately) heaviest of all in scale.

A major influence in bring-

ing about this lightness and delicacy of decorative detail in the Federal period was the discovery of the architecture of the ancient Roman ruins at Spalato and the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, which had been buried under volcanic ash in 79 A.D. and were excavated in the mid-18th century. One of those surveying the ruins at Spalato was the young English architect and designer Robert Adam, who made extensive drawings of the ancient architectural details and published in 1764 a folio entitled *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalato*. Robert Adam and his two brothers became a major influence in the design world. Their synthesis of the delicate ancient Roman decorative features such as swags, urns, slim colonettes and delicate moldings had a strong effect on architecture in England and the United States through the numerous architectural handbooks published in the period, such

as *The American Builder's Companion*, first published in 1806 in Boston by the architect Asher Benjamin.

In the early 19th century a knowledge of architecture was considered to be an integral part of a good education. Records show that individuals' libraries frequently contained several books on architecture and building, such as Asher Benjamin's. Since small rural towns like Huntsville had no architects (George Steele began building here in the 1820s), it is apparent that handbooks, together with the memories, imagination and skills of the owner and builder, were the primary influences on such elaborate and refined designs as those found in the Weeden House.¹ This system obviously worked well, for some of our most handsome architecture was produced in a time when architectural handbooks must have been the major design resource.

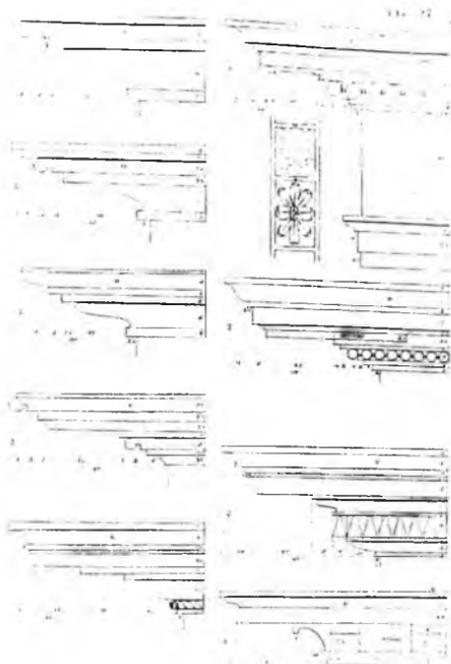
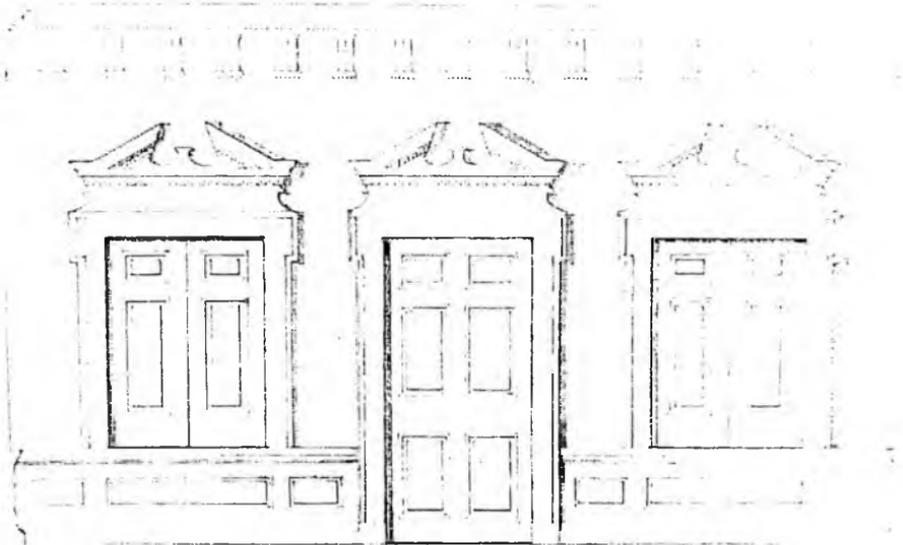


Plate 27 from Asher Benjamin's *AMERICAN BUILDER'S COMPANION* showing the Adamesque influence on cornices and molds.

An example of Georgian interior decoration from a Maryland house.

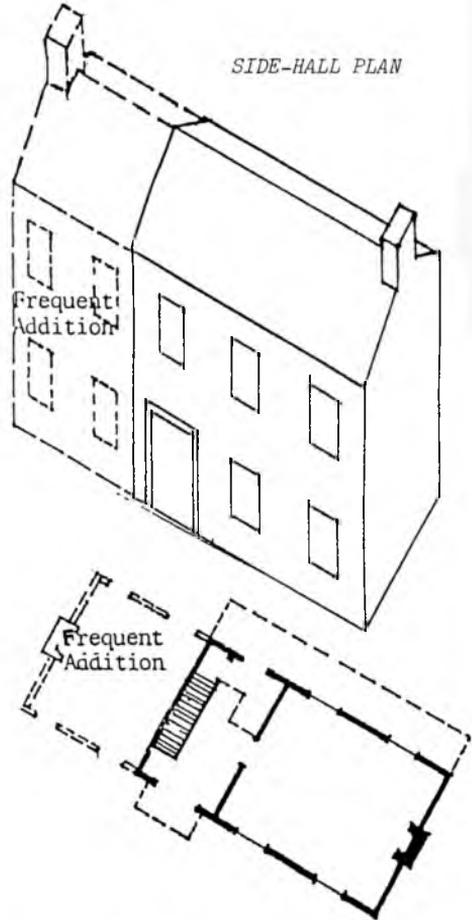


PLAN ARRANGEMENTS

Surviving Federal period houses in Huntsville indicate that the majority began as essentially two-room, two-story houses (one room per floor) with perhaps two service rooms (kitchen and servants') in a detached structure in the rear, and frequently a small room about eight feet square at the front of the upper stair hall. A few such examples are the Sprague-Chadwick, Cabaniss-Roberts, Feeney-Barber, Rhett, and Brickell houses. Several of these, such as the last two named, appear at a glance to have been built of-a-piece as a center hall house, but a closer look reveals clear and numerous evidences of an addition having been made to the side of the small original house to achieve a center hall design.

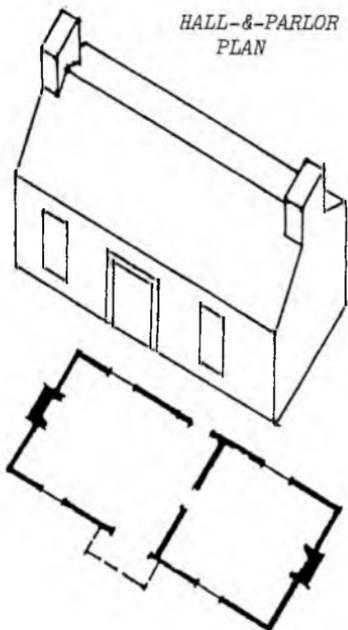
We might wonder how a family could manage in a house that consisted essentially of two main rooms, a kitchen, and a servant's room. The answer, histories tell us, is that only in relatively recent times have room functions become highly specialized and a separate room provided for each child. These early 19th century rooms were large, generally about 18 to 20 feet on a side, and were multipurpose. The downstairs parlor might contain both a dining table (which held a lamp or candle and also served as an evening reading table) and the parents' bed. It was not thought to be unseemly to receive visitors in a room containing a canopied and curtained bed. The upstairs room might contain two or more beds, and a single bed might accommodate several children.² Since most of these two-room houses

SIDE-HALL PLAN

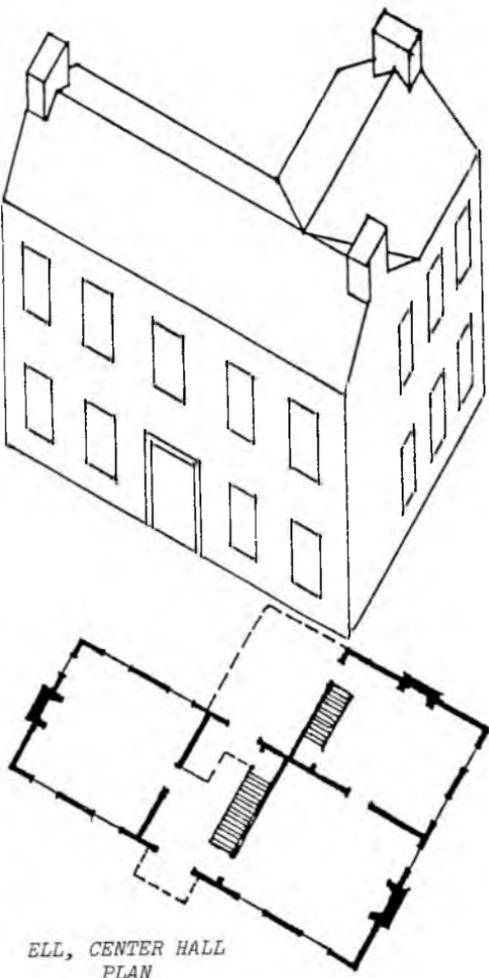


FEENEY-BARBER House, 414 Randolph

were added to fairly early in their history, their original builders may have considered them to be "starter" modules with the expectation that they would be enlarged as finances and number and sex of children indicated. Based on the architectural evidence, many of the Federal period two-room houses were enlarged to four or six rooms within a decade or so of their original construction. A few were built large initially, such as the six-room, ell-plan Weeden house of 1819.



The smallest known Federal period house here is the one-story, ca. 1828, Shepherd House. The original two front rooms are several feet less than the usual 18 to 20 foot dimensions, and there is no entry hall. The front door is approximately centered and opens directly into the larger of the two rooms, creating what is known as a "hall and parlor" plan. The larger room is the "hall" (in the medieval sense), and the smaller room is the "parlor" (which surely served as a bedroom).



Another interesting plan arrangement was the house that once stood on Banister Alley (recently reconstructed in somewhat the Federal configuration), which initially had one room on each floor, but no enclosed stair. The second floor room was reached by going out onto the back porch and mounting a stair that ascended under the steep porch roof.



SHEPHERD House, 505 Holmes

Numerous Federal period houses had stairs that opened directly into an upper bedroom rather than being separated in a stair hall. Two examples are the house on Homer Nance Road near Three Forks of Flint and the Weeden House. Other houses, such as the Cabaniss-Roberts House with its west wing addition, had rooms "in series" so that the farthest bedroom could only be reached by passing through another bedroom. In more distant times, this was a usual arrangement even in palaces. Corridors and privacy are relatively modern ideas.

The kitchen was usually placed in a building that was totally separated from the house, frequently without even a porch to provide shelter between the two. An extant example is the 1814 kitchen building at the LeRoy Pope House

(now called Echols Hill) on Echols Avenue. Sometimes however, a kitchen was placed inside the ground floor of "raised" houses (where the ground floor is sunk several feet into the soil). One example of this that comes to mind is the architect George Steele's original house at 519 Randolph, where the cooking crane was recently found still mounted inside the bricked-up fireplace in the rear ground-floor kitchen.

In addition to the kitchen, there would usually be servants' rooms, a smokehouse, shelter for horses and conveyances, a well-house, the "necessary," and perhaps other outbuildings. Madison County still has a surprising number of these outbuildings, except for the "necessaries" (privies); the last one known to the writer, which

was very old if not Federal, was a handsome example with beaded clapboard, wood shingled roof, and vestibule at the 1820s Bone-Wilbourn House in Hurricane Valley.

PORCHES

Architectural evidence confirms that many town houses of the early 19th century (here and elsewhere) had no roofed entry porch of any sort. The entry was exposed and the steps descended, sometimes without a landing at the top, directly to the ground. Three such examples are the Feeney-Barber, Sprague-Chadwick, and Weeden houses. Where entry porches were present, they were small and classical, such as on the Lewis-Sanford and Cabaniss-Roberts houses. Many Federal houses now have latter 19th century or early 20th century porches, and frequently these are complementary additions, even though the porch might be a flamboyant Vic-

torian object set against a staid Federal house. Two such happy instances are the Shepherd House and the Yeatman-Beck House.

Large rear porches, good for shelling peas and such, were apparently usual. Frequently they extended across the entire rear of the house.

ENTRIES AND WINDOWS

The incorporation of windows in some form at the entry was normal both for light and ventilation of the entry area. At a minimum there would be a rectangular operable transom (Sprague-Chadwick). In many cases there would also be sidelights, sometimes operable (Winston-Orgain). On more elaborate houses there would be a toplight of elliptical (Winston-Orgain) or semicircular shape (Grove-Bassett), sometimes of leaded glass (Weeden). Doors were frequently paired, with

SPRAGUE-CHADWICK Entry, 307 Randolph



FEENEY-BARBER Entry, 414 Randolph



blinds that could be closed over the open doors to provide the same functions as screened doors (which were not available until the late 19th century).

Windows similarly were provided with blinds, usually with moveable slats, to provide ventilation with privacy, sun protection, and some insect protection. At the time, these were called "Venetian blinds," after their Italian origin, and are properly termed "blinds" rather than "shutters," which are solid and without slats.

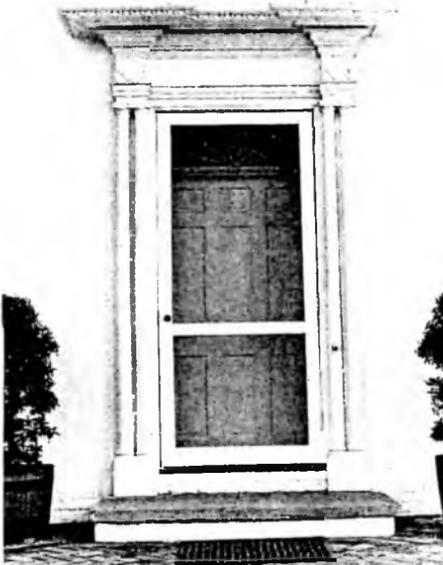
While sashes were usually placed individually in a wall, sometimes three were grouped to form a "modified Palladian" window--a normal sized sash flanked by two narrow sashes, but without the semicircular Palladian top to the central sash (Winston-Orgain).

Glass panes were small--usually ten by twelve inches or

eight by ten inches--since they had to be hauled from far away. The glass is "cylinder glass," meaning that first it is hand-blown into elongated bubbles, then has the ends cut off to form a cylinder, is reheated, sliced along the cylinder's side, and flattened. Therefore ripples, waves and bubbles are characteristic. The glass is very thin and fragile--about one-sixteenth of an inch thick. While we now regard this irregular glass as beautiful, much of it was discarded in the latter 19th century when clearer, bigger panes became available.

Various devices were used to lock sashes shut and to hold them open. The simplest is a wooden turn-latch which, due to its clever shape and placement, performs both functions; an example can be seen on the second floor of Constitution Hall. While sashes with ropes and weights were available, they were probably not common;

POPE House Entry, 403 Echols



GROVE-BASSETT Entry, 600 Franklin





WINSTON-ORGAIN House, 401 Lincoln

it is possible that those in the Weeden House were original-ly of this type.

Federal period rooms usually had four large windows, two each on opposite sides of the room, and these rooms are consequently much brighter than rooms in most modern houses.

HEATING AND VENTILATION

While major rooms each had a fireplace, the small room in the upper stair hall and the stair hall itself had no heat. The houses had no subfloors, so drafts through the floor and around the doors and windows were a major problem in extremely cold weather. Interior doors had raised wood sills to help block the drafts, and floors were frequently covered with carpet sewn in yard-wide strips that extended wall-to-wall to stanch the cold air, as well as for fashion. A fabric-covered cylindrical "pillow"

pushed against the door bottom also helped. The direct radiation of heat from the fireplace, plus lots of clothing, was the only way to get warm. Contemporary accounts confirm that these houses were better suited to summer than to winter, as the following recollection by Lillian Bone Paul reveals:

Wood fires, in a house with central heating, are very lovely. But if they are to be the source of warmth, they are less than satisfactory. As I have said, the rooms were huge--18 x 18 if I am not mistaken and with high ceilings. The fireplaces were in proportion, but most of the heat went up the chimney, and a hand laid on the chairboard could feel the cold wind rising from behind the panelling. Anyone facing the fire was warm in front, and in fact, might be baking, while his back was quite cold. One year Grandpa figured out a scheme to trap the heat and had

Grandma make heavy curtains of carpeting, which he had strung on a wire across the middle of the room, cutting down its area, but as well as I remember, not helping the temperature. ³

In summer, the two-story brick houses (with shade trees) were particularly well adapted to this climate. The thick brick walls have a "flywheel" effect, cooling off at night and radiating the coolness during the day. The two-story stairwell acts as a chimney, drawing warm air up and out and consequently pulling cooler air into the well ventilated rooms.

Chimneys were typically placed at the ends of the house, although some houses have the chimneys at the ridge line or at the rear wall (Clemens and Sprague-Chadwick houses). The gable projections on the Sprague-Chadwick House which appear to be chimneys are false, put there apparently to make the house "look right." At least two other Federal period houses here have false chimneys

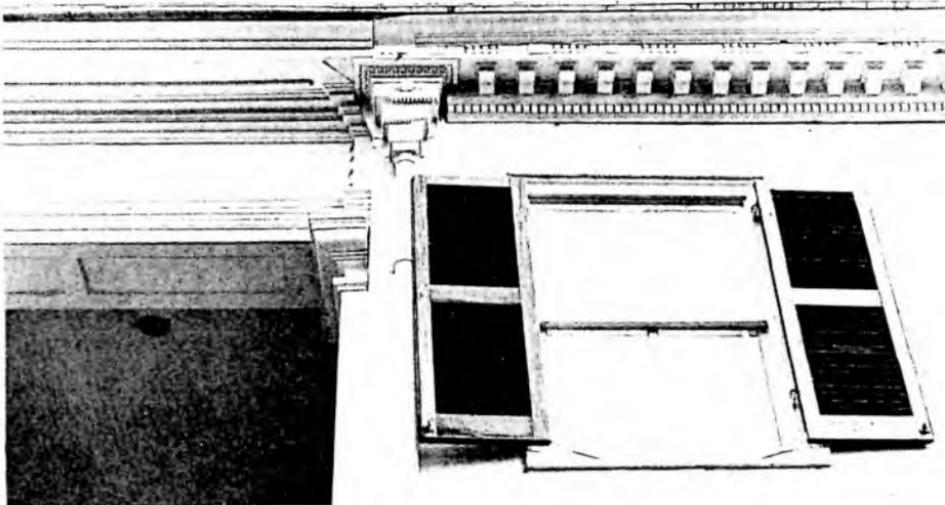


SPRAGUE-CHADWICK House, 307 Randolph Street (Feeney-Barber); all appear to be original to the houses.

ROOFS

The standing-seam metal roof now seen on many of our Federal period houses date from the late 19th or early 20th century

Cornice detail and leader head of POPE House, 403 Echols Street



All the attics the writer has been able to check thus far show either nail evidence of, or the presence of, hand-cut wood shingles, usually of heart cedar. The shingles were first sliced off with a "froe" knife and then smoothed with a drawknife. They strongly resemble a modern sawn shingle in size and thickness, except they are only about four inches wide. Those in the attic of the 1814 LeRoy Pope House are "fish-scale" round-butt design, whereas all others found thus far are square-butt. The shingles are attached with small cut nails onto rough decking slabs of wood, which usually have the bark still on the edges and have been nailed onto the roof joists.

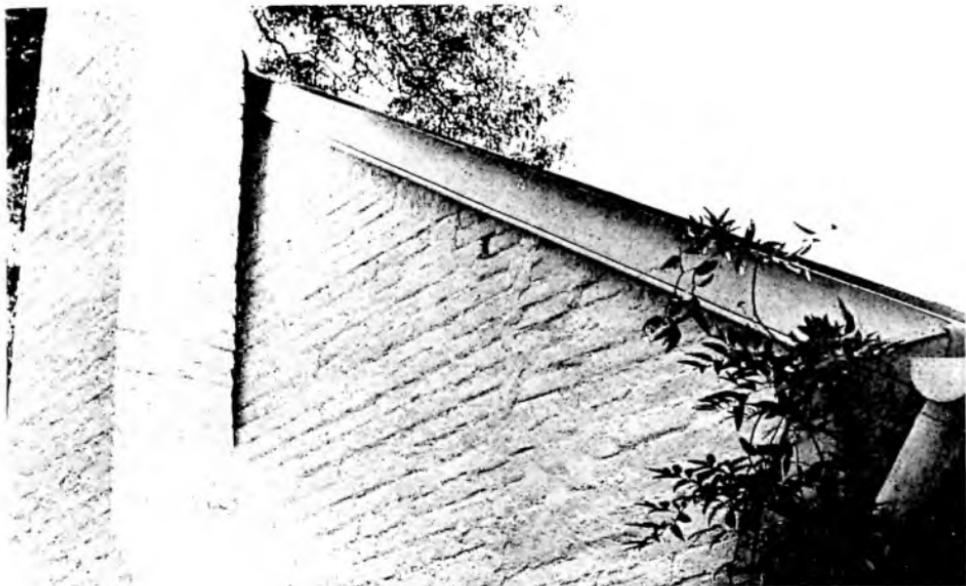
Gutters were usually (based on surviving examples) let down into the drip-eaves of the roof to conceal them. They apparently tended to leak, for most have been covered and abandoned for decades. The gutters and

drainspouts were metal, and the tinsmith's art was quite refined. Some beautiful examples of snipped-metal leader heads are at Echols Hill and (in storage) at the Weeden House.

Gable ends of roofs were typically cut flush with the gable wall (Weeden and Feeney-Barber houses). Those Federal period houses that now have overhanging gable eaves have been extended later, as joints in the eave-ends testify (Steele-Coons House and Public Inn). The rake-fascias on the gable slopes were usually tapered in width toward the ridge and beaded on the bottom edge, which produces a graceful design. An example is the west service building at Echols Hill.

Drip-eaves ranged from a simple boxed cornice to elaborate modillioned and molded cornices such as those on the Weeden House. Sometimes these cornices were simply cut off

Rake-fascia on west service building of the POPE House.



flat at the house end (Feeney-Barber), and sometimes were gracefully mitered and returned as at the Weeden House.

WOOD COMPONENTS

While most of our surviving Federal period houses are brick, the wood ones have simply been more vulnerable. At least four frame dwellings have been lost in the last three years (Gov. Gabriel Moore House, Kelley House, and one house each on S. Greene Street and Banister Alley). The wooden houses are framed in a method almost identical in structure to a modern house. There are joists, sills, studs, and rafters just like today, except the members are much heavier in section to allow for the loss of strength due to the cutouts at the mortise, tenon and peg connections. Roman numerals chiseled into the wood indicate that the heavy frame and its connections were prefabricated on the

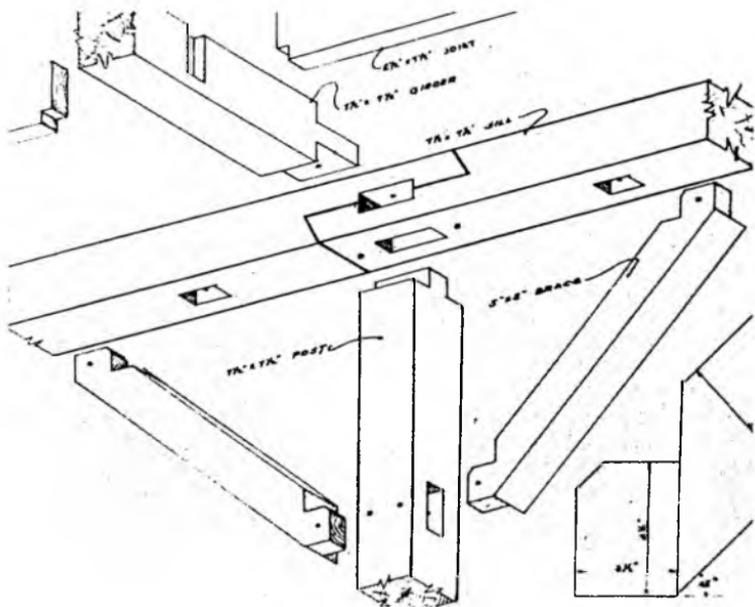
ground and then erected, using the numbered joints to correctly assemble the components. Cut nails were used to attach flooring, clapboarding, lath, trim and other light members.

Wood components were made by squaring the log with an ax and then pit-sawing it into boards. Floor joists were sometimes "puncheons," a log with the top flattened to receive the flooring. Flooring and clapboarding were usually sash-sawn (a steam or water powered up-and-down saw), and lath was hand split. Even the 1814 LeRoy Pope House has mechanically sawn original heart pine 5/4 inch flooring. Large mechanical sash sawmills were in operation as early as the late 1700s in the North. Moldings were hand-planed using shaped molding planes; steam-powered molding-plane machines began to be used in the 1830s in some parts of the country.

Flooring was installed di-

Cornice and gable wall of WEEDEN House.





Nineteenth century framing illustrating mortised, tenoned and pegged joints.

rectly on the joists without a subfloor. The boards were about 1 1/8 inches thick and varied from about five to eight inches wide. An exception is the 1819 Weeden House entry which has original flooring about 2 1/2 inches wide with atypically tight joints. This floor, unlike most, was apparently intended to be exposed rather than covered with carpeting or matting. Several widths of floor boards would frequently be installed in the same room. Period drawings and paintings tell us that floors in this period were generally covered or substantially covered with carpeting, rugs, straw matting, or painted canvas. Therefore the prominent cracks between the boards were not of great concern visually.

In Madison County, most flooring was of heart pine--a very dense, heavy wood that bears no resemblance to the pulpy, light modern pine. To-

day's "dense" grade pine has about six growth rings per inch, whereas the Federal period heart pine sometimes has 25 or more rings per inch. In addition to pine, many floors were heart poplar, and examples of ash and oak have been observed. The flooring was normally tongued-and-grooved, but some was butt-jointed. The neat cut "sprig" nail heads were normally exposed. These floors were scrubbed, but not varnished; varnished floors became popular after the Civil War.

Heart poplar was a favorite wood for house frames, clapboard, and finished pieces, such as doors and moldings. It is rot and insect resistant, cuts like butter, and accepts intricate shaping. Pine was also much used for framing and trim. While this pine was relatively resistant to rot and insects, it was more apt to be damaged than heart poplar.

The wooden mantels (properly termed chimney-pieces) were where the Adamesque neoclassic flamboyance was most strongly expressed. Sunbursts, urns, colonettes, and acanthus leaves were among the devices used in the seemingly endless variety of carvings. The mantel shelf frequently was composed of several deep, flaring molds similar to plate 27 in Asher Benjamin's *The American Builder's Companion* of 1827.

In the more ambitious houses, the stair-tread ends were ornamented with scrollwork cut from thin boards (about 1/4 inch thick) with a scrollsaw. The newel posts were miniature Tuscan colonettes with a knobbed block on top to receive a rounded rail. The balusters were slim and rectangular in section--not turned--and were placed two to a tread. A few houses had graceful curved stairs (Cox-Hilson and Weeden) or scroll-ended rails with no newel. The simpler houses had

rectangular rails and newels with rounded tops. These slim, simple balustrades reflect the lightness of scale of the Federal period in contrast to the heavier Georgian trim.

The use of sandpaper was apparently confined to furniture. Plane marks can usually be seen or felt on doors or other "flat" surfaces.

Doors were most frequently six-paneled, but sometimes four-paneled (Kelley House). Board-and-batten or laminated-board doors were used in utilitarian locations (Phelps-Jones House). The panels were flat on the less prominent side and raised and beveled on the other side. A few panels are beaded-edged and as thick as the rails and stiles. The almost universal practice of beveling only the more prominent side of the panels informs us that our ancestors also felt that money should be spent where it shows, and that human nature is a very

A Federal period mantel in the POPE House illustrating the use of Adamesque neoclassic motifs such as sunburst designs, colonettes, and deep, flaring molds.

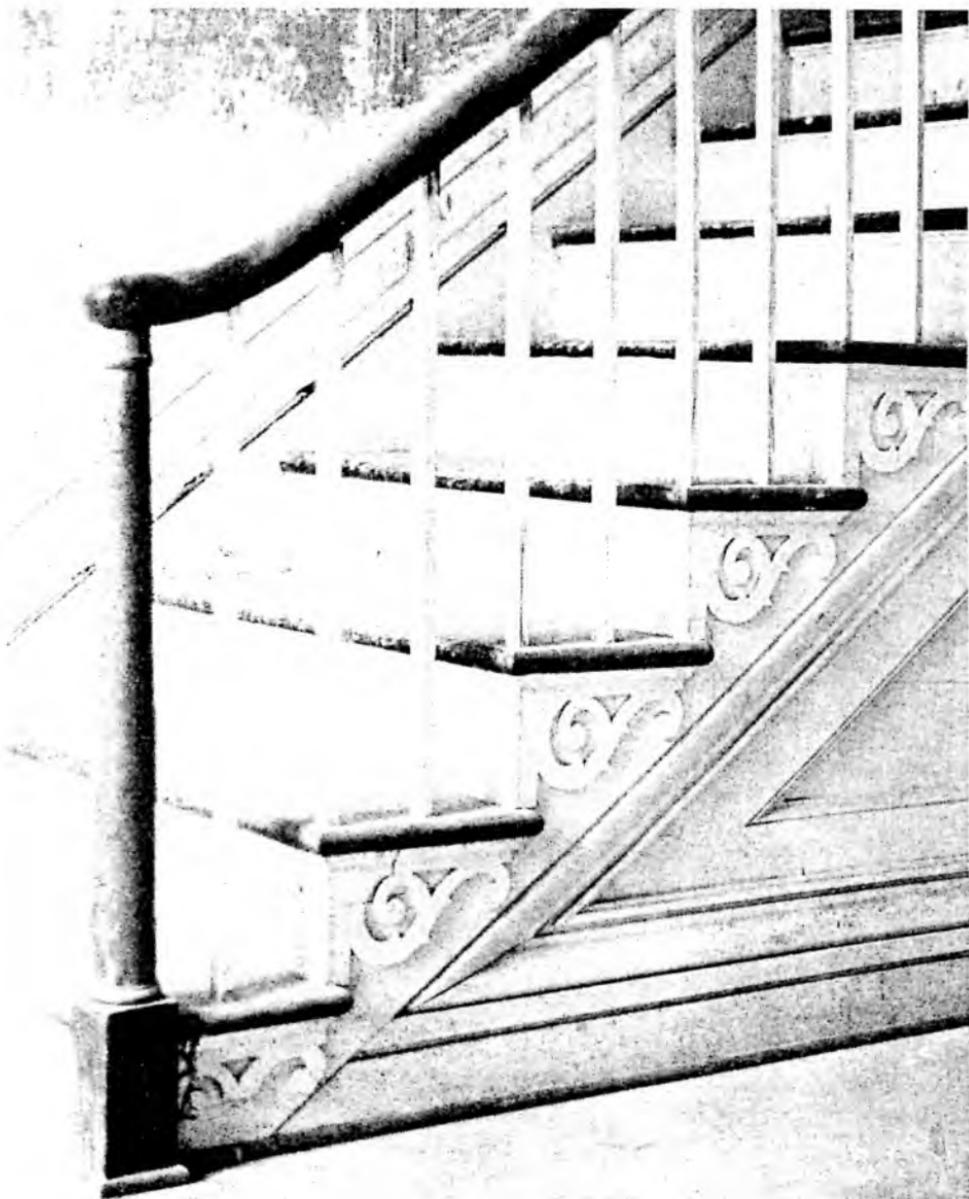


constant thing.

Most rooms examined had chair rails which were an extension of the window sill and

apron profile, although many of these have been removed at some later date. Conversely, the writer has yet to find a Federal period house in this area

Federal period stairway, FEENEY-BARBER House.



that originally had room cornices, although many have been added in recent years. We should resist the urge to "improve" history. (Some Federal balustrades have been removed and discarded in favor of modern miniature "Georgian" versions.) Early paint evidence at the Weeden House indicates that approximately 18 inch wide wallpaper borders were sometimes used to trim the tops of rooms, even in conjunction with painted walls.

Trim was installed in the house prior to the plaster work --the reverse of today's procedure. Baseboards were scribed to the floor without a shoemold, although many shoemolds have been added as settlement occurred. Baseboard tops and door and sash frame edges were beaded for better appearance and to lessen splintering of the edge. Clapboards were frequently beaded on the bottom exposed edge for the same reasons.

BRICK AND STONE

Since limestone was plentiful and easily worked, it is found in the foundations of all Federal period brick or wood houses the writer recalls. Frequently it extends out of the ground, not higher than the first floor. It was laid in a hand chiseled ashlar or random ashlar (coursed) bond. The writer has observed no "rubble" bond walls of this period: they were always coursed, probably because of the low-strength lime mortar that was used. The stones were sometimes quite heavy--about three feet by one foot square (approximately 500 pounds). One wonders how they were handled.

In rural houses, limestone was frequently used for chim-

neys. A typical pattern was to use stone up to the top of the chimney shoulders and then to continue with brick for the top, thin portion of the chimney. While this appears strange to us, it was logical and economical, and there are many such chimneys in the county to demonstrate the prevalence of the practice.

Every early house has its legend of the brick being made "right on the grounds," but we know that the architect and builder George Steele was making brick commercially in Huntsville in the 1820s. We also know, from looking at the houses, that brick was made in both "select" and "common" grades. The select brick is found on the front of the house, usually laid in an attractive but expensive Flemish bond (alternate bricks turned endways), and the common brick is on the sides and rear, laid in the least costly "common bond." Only one house in the county has been observed thus far to have Flemish bond on all sides --the late 1820s Bone-Wilbourn House.

At least two Federal period houses in Limestone County have molded-shaped brick cornices and water tables, but none are known to survive in Madison County. Molded-shaped brick is found here to form some Greek Revival column bases and capitals, and it is likely that it existed in the Federal period.

The pre-1820 Phelps-Jones House on Pulaski Pike has a rarity for Alabama, according to Robert Gamble of the Historic American Buildings Survey; the flat arches that form the sash lintels are made of gauged (tapered) and rubbed brick. The rubbing smoothes the faces and imparts a richer color to

the bricks, and the gauging makes for uniform neat joints in the radiating arch bricks.

A subtle and attractive refinement of the brick Bone-Wilbourn House is that the top floor sash openings are narrower and shorter than those at the first floor, imparting a sort of entasis to the facade by making the bottom appear heavier and bigger than the top. This detail harkens back to the 18th century and is to be found in such Georgian examples as the Wythe House in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Brick houses almost always had somewhat irregular troweled mortar joints that were then routinely "penciled" with 1/4 inch wide stripes of white paint to dress up the irregular joints. An exception is the 1819 Grove-Bassett House, which has beaded joints on the front. An article in the *Association for Preservation Technology Bulletin*

states that this was a common practice after the Revolutionary War when inexpensive apprentice labor to tool the joints was harder to come by.

Lintels over windows were sometimes faced with stucco in a flat wedge shape imitative of a stone lintel. The flat brick work was recessed about an inch to receive the stucco, as can be seen on the south half of the Rhett House where the stucco has come off. Perhaps the plentiful real limestone was not used due to lack (or cost) of stone sawing equipment.

HARDWARE

Since the doors were very thin (about 1 1/4 inches), mortised locks have not been observed here, although they did exist in this period. Rimlocks, mounted on the surface of the thin doors, had to be used. Most frequently they were the type licensed in the early

BONE-WILBOURN House, Hurricane Creek Road



1800s by L. E. Carpenter & Sons to be made by various manufacturers. This was a refinement of a lift-latch (the striker does not retract) with the latch encased in a black iron box and with small brass knobs. The circular brass trademark near the knob shows the rampant lions of the Carpenter brand.

House doors had leaf hinges that look much like modern hinges except that they were of cast iron, cleverly cast as a unit (for economy) so that the pins were integral and could not be pulled out.

Utilitarian doors had blacksmith made strap iron hinges and lift-latches or carved wooden hinges and latches. The wood hinges also served as a batten, stretching across the width of the door boards. The pintle was a wooden dowel attached to the jamb, projecting up through a hole drilled in the wooden strap. Leather hinges are also known to have been used, according to historical accounts. Latches might be either a thumb-latch or lift-latch. The entry door was secured from inside by a wooden bar laid across the door, cradled in iron or wooden brackets.

The strap iron hinges had various attractive decorative ends in the shape of hearts, spears, tadpoles, or ovals. An "S" strap on a wall brace in Maysville has snake-head ends. The most beautiful blacksmith work is in the footscrapers, some of which are minor works of sculpture.

Perhaps there is no great mystery to smithing, however. Several years ago John Martz of Huntsville became interested in Federal period hardware and received permission to use the Kelley blacksmith shop at Jeff.

Within a couple of hours, with no instruction and no previous experience, he had a beautiful strap hinge. If there was any problem with it, it was that it was better made than most of the antique ones. Jim Batson has recently done some fine blacksmith work for the hardware at the Constitution Park reconstructions.

The cut nails of the early 1800s are, to many people's surprise, machine made. The first cut nail factories began in the late 1700s, and by the early 1800s, virtually all were made by either steam or water powered machines. We tend to romanticize the early 1800s and forget that it was the age of the Industrial Revolution. A few special shaped handmade nails have been observed that could not be made on the machines available, but they are rare exceptions.

Surviving hinges for blinds are cast iron, known to have been available in the Federal period. Strap hinges were likely to have been in use on blinds too, for they survive on even later buildings in other parts of Alabama. The Bone-Wilbourn House has handmade "S" scroll holdbacks, and various other types of blacksmith-made holdbacks can be seen in the county.

PAINT AND WALLPAPER

Contrary to almost everyone's belief, the interiors of Federal period houses were infrequently painted cream or white. The colors used, based on several examined, were usually deep and rich--burgundy, turquoise, forest green, powder blue, and rose pink. Mantels were most frequently black or partly black with shiny varnish over the black paint to high-

light the Adamesque shapes. That this was a common decorative theme is borne out in *Americans at Home and Recreating the Historic House Interior*, while the deep, rich colors can be seen in the plates of *The Work of Robert Adam*. The black mantels nicely complemented these rich wall colors.

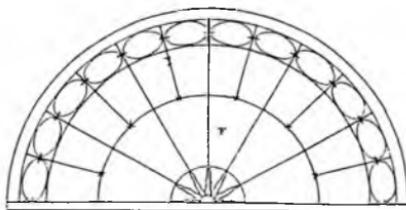
Wallpaper was also available according to contemporary newspaper advertisements. Traces of a delicate pattern were found stained on the plaster of the 1814 LeRoy Pope House in 1979.

Doors were most frequently "grained" to imitate various woods. Burlled panels were frequent. In the Weeden House, most of the other interior trim was also grained.

SUMMARY

While our Federal period houses may appear at first to be simple and almost identical in design, there is an enormous variety in their detail. As with any other worthy subject, study and increased knowledge bring an increased appreciation and understanding and a realization of how much is not yet known or understood. We have barely scratched the surface of understanding our architectural heritage from the early 19th century (or any other time). We should continue to care for this heritage, for even with care, more will be lost by destruction or by attrition. Perhaps attrition is the more dangerous loss, since it sneaks up on us. One small change does not seem serious, but a small change every ten years for 160 years becomes serious indeed. To emphasize these points, this paper does not address Federal period commercial or public architecture

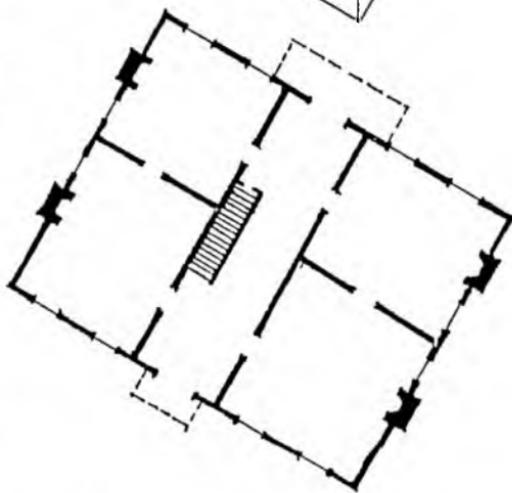
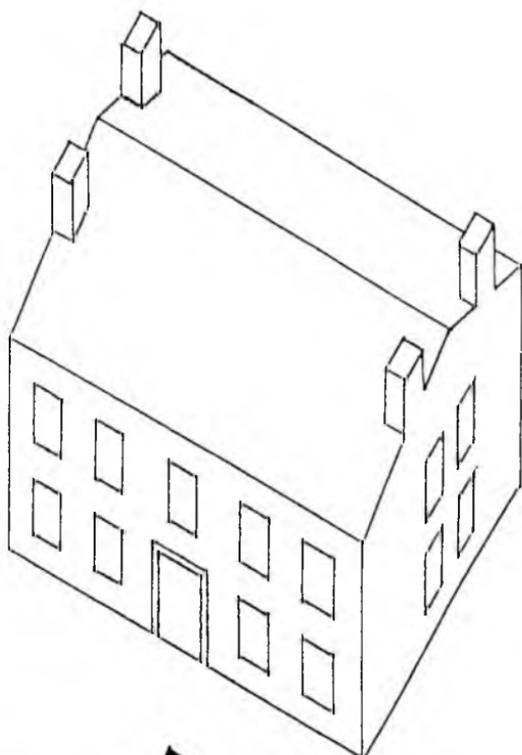
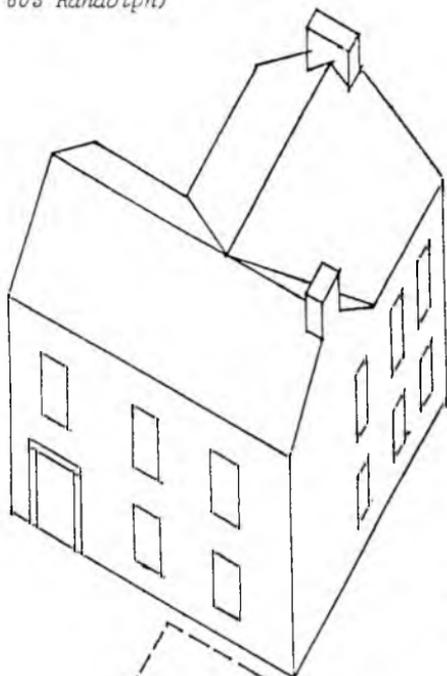
for the simple reason that we have lost it all. Twenty years ago, we still had several examples. It is now too late to study and appreciate it--it is gone. Let us endeavor to see that this does not happen to any other segment of our architectural history!



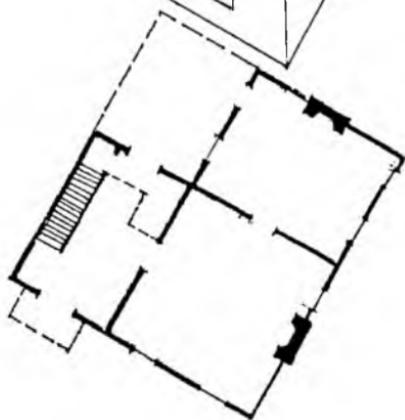
- 1 A task yet to be done is to compare Huntsville's Federal period detail with these handbooks (the UAH library has a collection of them) to determine some of the handbooks that were in use here.
- 2 As recently as this century, my grandmother's 1820s parlor contained a bed, and my father and his brothers slept four to one bed.
- 3 From an unpublished manuscript, "Memories of Lillian Bone Paul," of life in the 1820s Bone-Wilbourn House in Hurricane Valley, written in the late 19th century.

ADDITIONAL FEDERAL PERIOD
FLOOR PLANS

SIDE-HALL & REAR WING PLAN
(Ex. Cabanis-Roberts
603 Randolph)



CENTER-HALL PLAN
(Ex. Pynchon-Powell
518 Adams)



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The Maria Howard Weeden House

Introduction

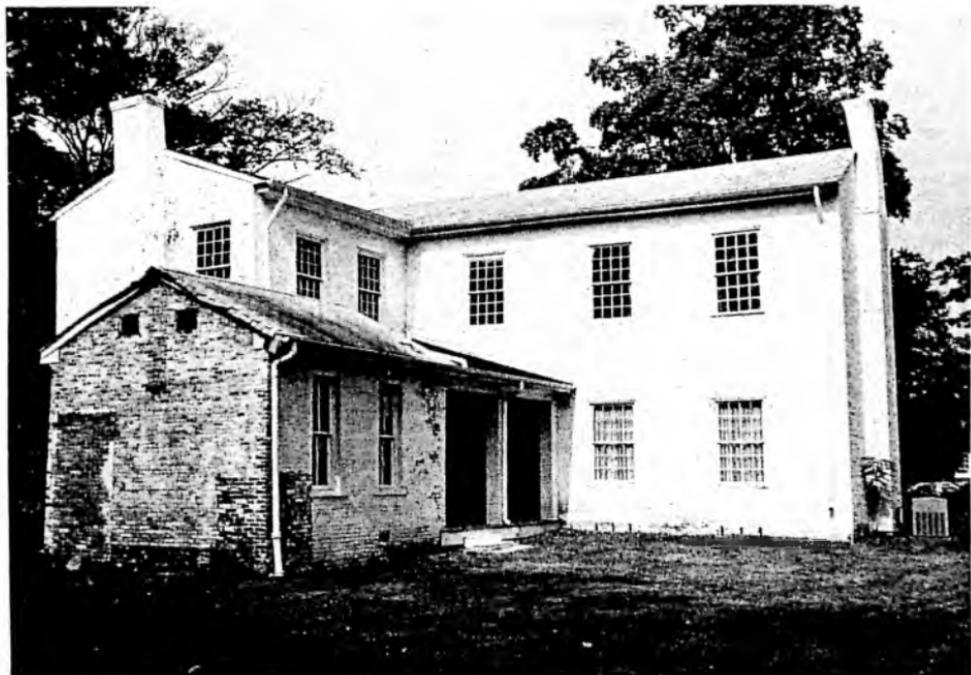
The Maria Howard Weeden House is one of Huntsville's architectural gems. A distinguished example of Federal period domestic building, it is one of the city's earliest surviving brick buildings. Built in 1819, it represents the architecture of early statehood in Alabama.

Harvie P. Jones wrote his essay to honor the opening of the Weeden House as a museum. The entire Vol. VIII, No. 1, Fall, 1981 issue of *Historic Huntsville Quarterly* was dedicated to the Weeden House's gardens, owners, and architecture, with articles by Sarah Huff Fisk, Frances Roberts, and Harvie.

The lot on which the Weeden House stands had several early owners, but it was Henry Bradford who purchased the lot in May 1819 for \$700 and constructed the two-story brick residence that survives today. Bradford soon relocated to Arkansas, and the house knew other owners until 1845, when Dr. William Weeden purchased it. Weeden died soon after, but his family and descendants—including his talented daughter Maria Howard—lived in the house for more than 100 years. In 1973, the Twickenham Historic Preservation District Association acquired the Weeden House. They later sold it to the Huntsville Housing Authority, leasing it back to operate a historic house museum and making it available for receptions and parties.

In 1934, the kitchen-service building at the rear of the Weeden House was torn down to make way for a garage, shortly after it was photographed and measured for the Historic American Buildings Survey. Harvie hoped that someday it would be rebuilt. His hopes have been realized.

Reconstruction of the kitchen, on its original foundations, has recently been completed (we look forward to an article on the reconstruction in a forthcoming *Historic Huntsville Quarterly*). The Weeden House, including its kitchen, is open from one to four p.m. every day except Monday. It is located at 300 Gates Avenue, Huntsville.



Rear view of the Weeden House from the southeast

The Structure

by Harvie Jones

BACKGROUND

The style of American architecture termed Federal was generally popular during the period 1776 to 1835. This style was greatly influenced by the light and elegant designs created by the English architect Robert Adam who practiced in England from 1750 to 1780. Adam, in turn, was strongly influenced by the newly discovered interiors of ancient Roman houses, which were revealed by the archaeological excavations at Pompeii and Spalato in the mid 1700s. These cities had

been buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79, and their excavations illustrated for the first time that ancient Roman interiors had been decorated with very light, elegant motifs such as colonettes, urns, molds, and swags. Adam's work, based on these examples, contrasted strongly with the heavy interior decorative elements of the Georgian period (of the first two thirds of the eighteenth century), which had been derived from the heavy ornament of Roman public buildings.

The Weeden House, located at 300 Gates Street, is a superb example of Federal period domestic architecture as constructed in Huntsville. The house was recorded in 1934 as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey and is located in the Twickenham Historic District, a National Register of Historic Places district.

carved piece. (These flutes are repeated at a much smaller scale on one of the upstairs mantels--an interesting example of design continuity.) The underside of the boxed cornice is decorated with a series of carved wooden blocks called, in the Corinthian order, modillions.



The roof cornice and frieze on the front facade.

WEEDEN HOUSE EXTERIOR

Constructed in 1819, the Weeden House is a two-story, ell-shaped, brick house having a gabled roof and a center hall layout. It is called a five-bay house because there are five windows across the facade on each level. The roof cornice and the frieze below the front roof eave are loosely based on the classical Corinthian order. The frieze features a leaf-patterned, cast lead design topped by a band of small vertical wooden flutes; each of these hundreds of flutes is a separate, hand-

A three-room kitchen and service building at the rear of the house was removed during the period 1934 to 1950 to make way for a garage. However, this kitchen-service building was measured and photographed in the 1934 Historic American Buildings Survey, and its foundations are still intact under the soil. It is hoped that this original service building will be reconstructed.

Architectural evidence shows that the six-room, ell-plan Weeden House was built all-of-a-piece, whereas most of Huntsville's surviving Federal period houses started with just

two rooms. These starter houses had one room on each floor, with sometimes a small room in the upper stairhall, and a separate kitchen and service building; various later additions increased them to their present size. Thus the Weeden House must have been unusually ambitious for Huntsville in its initial conception and was certainly ambitious in the refinement and extent of its woodwork. No other surviving Federal period Huntsville house has woodwork of the elaboration of the Weeden House.

The entry with its semicircular, leaded glass fanlight and slender, reeded colonettes is particularly beautiful. The glass sidelights also were leaded in a pattern of semi-circles, as is evident by the cut-off ends of the lead comes that remain along the edges of the sidelights.

Architectural evidence indicates that the exterior brick walls were not painted until after the mid nineteenth century. Originally the brick mortar joints were "pencilled," that is, lined with quarter inch wide white paint stripes to emphasize and visually straighten the joints. This practice of pencilling joints became widespread after the Revolutionary War, when cheap apprentices were not available to laboriously tool the joints in beaded or grapevine shapes. Pencilling was almost universal in Huntsville prior to the Civil War; the author has seen few houses of the period without traces of striped joints, which was done as a part of the new construction rather than as a later touch-up.

The brick on the two street sides of the house is well formed and laid in Flemish bond

(alternate bricks turned end-ways)--a beautiful pattern but expensive even in 1819. Since most people, then and now, believe in spending money where it will show, the sides of the house away from the streets display an irregular and cheaper brick laid in the less expensive common bond and executed in such a casual manner that sometimes the courses of brick do not even meet at the corners. It is endearing, rather than demeaning, to see evidence that people were people in 1819, just as they are now, with all their faults and virtues. The writer has seen only two Federal period houses in the Tennessee Valley that have Flemish bond brickwork on all sides; the vast majority are like the Weeden House.

The double-hung windows with twelve panes (or lights) in each sash are counterbalanced with ropes and iron weights; this is an unusual feature because most houses of the period had sashes that were held open by a wooden turn-latch or a metal friction-catch. Many of the window panes are the original, thin (about 1/16 inch) cylinder glass, which contains beautiful irregularities. To make cylinder glass, the glass-blower first would blow an elongated bubble, let it cool, cut off the domical ends to form a cylinder, then reheat the cylinder and slit one side so that it flattened into a sheet. The sheets were then cut into individual panes. The irregularities in the glass are a result of this hand process.

The wooden elements of the Weeden House are joined by pegged mortise and tenon connections. To make such a joint, the end of one member is trimmed to make a tenon which is slipped into a slot (mortise)



The sidelights of the front entry are flanked by extremely attenuated, reeded columns grouped in pairs. The leaded glass of the sidelights has been replaced.

cut into the other member. A peg--called a treenail, later slurred into trunnel--is inserted through both to hold them in place. The window sashes in the Weeden House have pegged corners as do all the blinds, mantels, and doors and the concealed connections of the door frames, rafters, and joists. The ends of the tenons can be seen at the edges of the blinds and doors. A machine

for making concealed tenons was not invented until later in the nineteenth century.

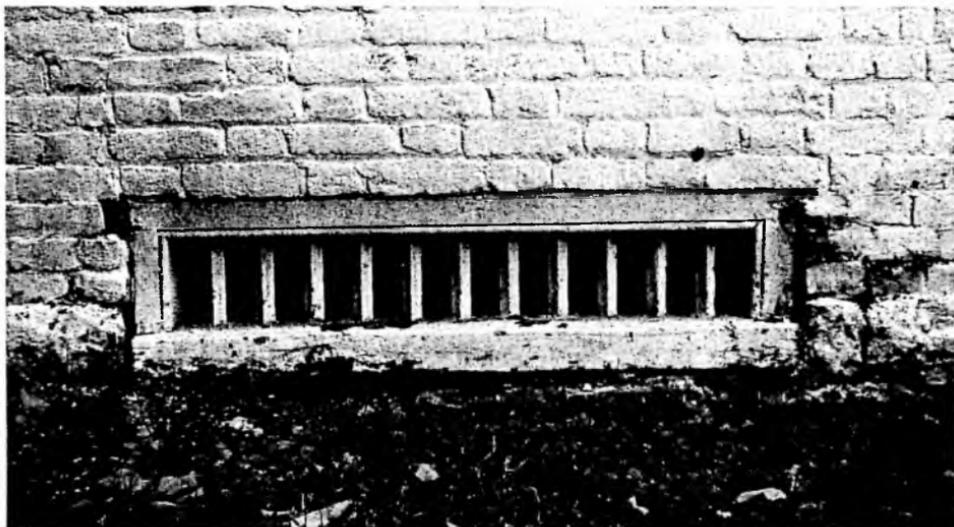
The Weeden House has flat arches of brick over its windows, whereas many of the Federal period brick houses have lintels of heavy eight inch deep cedar. The Weeden window sills are of wood, which was the normal practice; the writer has seen no brick sills on Fed-

A typical Weeden House window with twelve panes in each sash, lintels of brick, sills of wood, and wooden blinds.



eral period houses. The window jambs (vertical wooden sides of a window) are semicircular on the outward edges--a frequent and elegant touch in Federal period architecture.

The design of the wooden foundation vents is common for houses of this period but is, nevertheless, very elegant for so prosaic a device. The vertical bars of the vents are



A foundation vent illustrating the diagonally placed bars and the three-quarter round mold framing the opening. Notice the Flemish bond of the surrounding brickwork.

The Weeden House has blinds, not shutters. Blinds have blades with openings between them, whereas shutters are solid-paneled to exclude light and air when closed. In fact, these blinds are referred to as "Venetian blinds" in writings and contracts of the early nineteenth century. Solid shutters apparently were used only on commercial buildings for security purposes because this is where the few survivors are found. Venetian blinds functioned to block the summer sun without blocking the cooling breezes and to discourage the entry of insects, for insect screen wire was not invented until the late 1800s. Blinds also provided security to a house with open windows.

twisted forty-five degrees so that their vertical corners, rather than their flat faces, face outward. This produces a rhythm of angular adjoining faces in lieu of a dull row of flat bars. Another refinement can be seen at the corners of the frames where a three-quarter round mold is used to create a decorative bead, which adds greatly to the appearance of these vents.

The Weeden House chimney tops now curve inward towards the roof, as they do in most old houses. The explanation is that rain-wetted lime mortar slowly forms a chemical compound that swells the mortar joints, thereby expanding the wall vertically. Since the

outer face of a chimney receives more moisture from its increased exposure to rain, it swells more, resulting in a curve over the house.

The Weeden House was built on unstable soil and has been settling, like the Pisa Cathedral in Italy, ever since. A close look at the brick walls reveals that none are level or plumb. The dining room is several inches lower in the southwest corner than in the northeast corner. In the late 1970s, many tons of cement were injected at high pressure into the soil beneath the house in an effort to stabilize it.

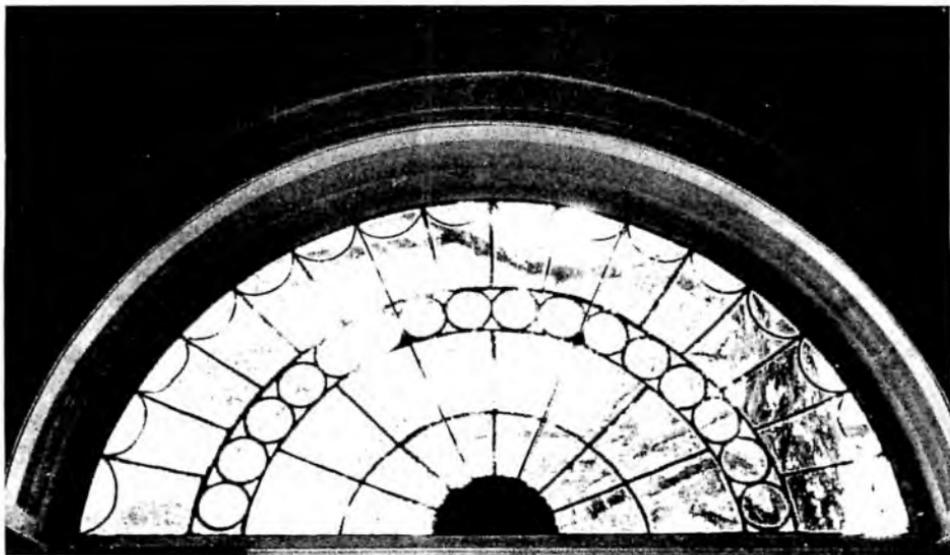
WEEDEN HOUSE INTERIOR

The glory of the Weeden House interior is its entry, which is brilliantly lighted by the large leaded-glass fanlight, the sidelights, and the window over the gracefully spiralling stair. (In 1970 this entry

was found to be rather dark and gloomy because the high rear window had been blocked by a bathroom addition.) The rear wall of the entry is curved in a cylindrical shape to follow the spiral of the stair. Thus three major curved elements--fanlight, stair and rear wall--are present in the entry, a reflection of the Adamesque influence. More ambitious houses of this period had entire rooms in the shape of ellipses or circles--such as the Octagon House in Washington, D.C.--in imitation of the English designs of Robert Adam.

The pine flooring in the entry is fairly narrow, less than three inches wide, and has tight joints, whereas flooring five to six inches wide with open joints is usual for the period and is found in the other Weeden House rooms. It was first thought that later flooring had been laid over the original wide flooring in the

The leaded-glass fanlight of the front entry as seen from the inside.





The front entry of the Weeden House

entry, but investigation proved that the tightly laid, narrow flooring is original. Further research has revealed other Federal period houses exhibiting this same variation between the entry and the other rooms. The probable explanation is that many Federal period wooden floors were covered by some material such as wall-to-wall carpeting (three foot wide strips sewn together), woven straw matting, or even canvas, a custom documented by contemporary drawings and paintings. Probably the entrance floor was not meant to be covered; therefore, the builder took special care in cutting and installing the narrow boards to get tight joints and vertical grain.

A careful examination of the floor near the baseboard in the northwest parlor reveals hundreds of carpet-tack holes--proof that the Weeden House did have wall-to-wall carpeting at some date. The oriental rugs in the house today are representative of post-Civil War fashion when oriental rugs became both popular and less costly. Illustrations from the Federal period more frequently show small "Turkey rugs" (as oriental rugs were often called) being used as parlor table coverings; perhaps they were too expensive for most people to walk on.

Although the Weeden House floors have traces of varnish on them, varnish is another post-Civil War fashion. Prior to the Civil War, wooden floors were periodically scrubbed (sometimes using sand and bricks) to keep them a light bleached color. A look under the rugs still reveals this bleached finish, for the later varnish was applied only around the edges of the rooms.

The dense pine flooring is very thick (about 1 1/8 inches) and is laid directly on the floor joists without a subfloor. The floor boards have tongue-and-groove joints, but shrinkage has opened many cracks, which explains the reputation for draftiness of early nineteenth century houses. Recently, insulation has been added under the Weeden House floors.

The flooring was mechanically sawn by water-powered sash saws, as was all of the wood except for the large members, such as floor joists, which were ax-hewn and pit-sawn (hand sawn). The local sawmills in 1819 probably consisted of water-powered sash saws (up-and-down saws). Some areas of the country had steam-powered sash saws as early as the late 1700s, but none are known to have been in operation here that early. Mechanically powered circular saws also existed in the late 1700s but were not used much until the 1830s. The earliest circular-sawn lumber found in Huntsville thus far is in the 1860 Huntsville depot and in parts of the 1860 First Presbyterian Church. The fact that this church has only a little circular-sawn lumber combined with the sash-sawn lumber indicates that the circular saw must have been a new and novel item in 1860 and its product not available in large quantities.

One interesting detail of the Weeden entry stair is the manner in which the scroll pattern on the stair edge compresses, yet holds its design, where the stair steepens at the start of the spiral. Another is that several of the balusters are not of wood but of iron--a clever and unobtrusive structural device, which stif-

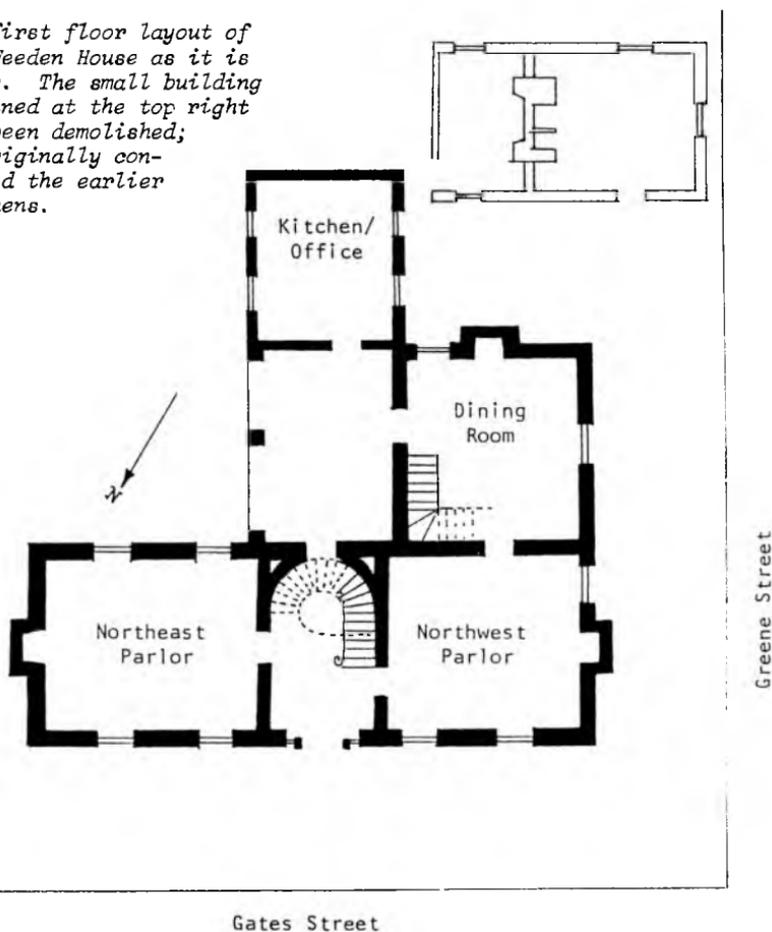
fens the rail and probably forms a truss to support the cantilevered edge of the stairs.

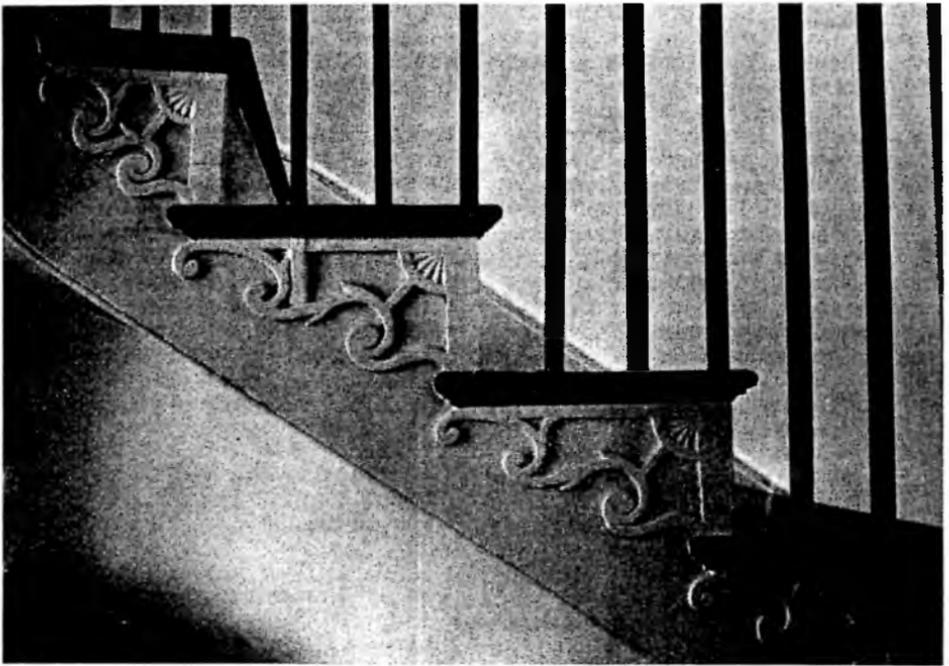
The two-paneled door beneath the entry stair is Greek Revival in design, perhaps dating from the 1850s, rather than Federal. The six-paneled doors in the remainder of the house are of Federal design and represent the most common configuration for doors of this period, although occasionally four-paneled doors were used. The missing Federal door from the rear of the entry hall was

curved to fit the curve of the wall, an elegant and unusual but not unique feature; an examination of the door frame head from the back porch confirms this design detail.

The stair rail is roughly circular in cross section to fit the hand and is the most frequent shape used during this period. The stair balusters are small and rectangular in cross section, a feature that is universal in surviving houses of the period in Huntsville. No turned Federal period balus-

The first floor layout of the Weeden House as it is today. The small building outlined at the top right has been demolished; it originally contained the earlier kitchens.





This detail of the stair scrolls shows how the pattern compresses as the stairway begins to curve.

ters have been observed by this writer, either here or elsewhere, although there must be some exceptions.

A small ivory button is centered in the bottom end-spiral of the stair rail. The tradition is that this signifies payment of all debt on the house.

The mantels in the two front rooms of the first floor are Greek Revival, perhaps dating from an 1850s remodeling. The change in scale from Federal to Greek Revival is most noticeable; the Greek Revival forms are heavy and simple--even blocky--and contrast greatly with the delicate Adamesque molding found on all the original woodwork. The two Greek Revival mantels and the entry hall rear door are the only

later elements in the Weeden House, making it a rare example of basically unaltered Federal period construction. However, these later features represent part of the history of the house and are to be kept in place. They were in the house during the life of Maria Howard Weeden and so are important historical elements.

The interior doors are very thin, just 1 1/8 inches. This is considerably thinner than a modern house door (1 3/8 inches) but is typical of the Federal period. The locks are reproductions of the original "Carpenter" brand rimlocks that were in the house, one of which survived on the dining room door.

The interior woodwork of the Weeden House is the most elab-

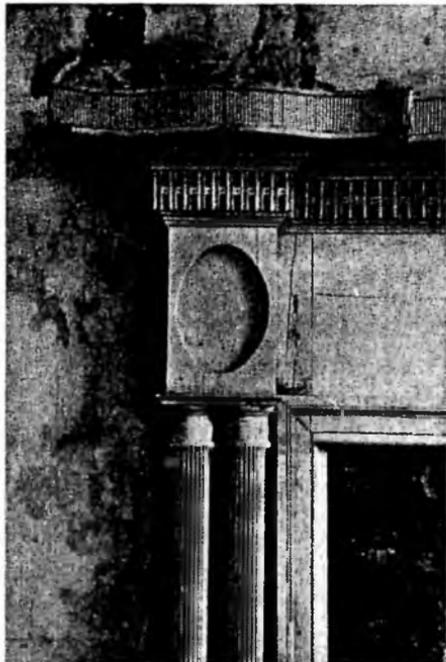
orate in Madison County and is intact except for a missing chair rail in the northwest parlor and the above mentioned mantels and door. Because the design of the chair rail is not known, the rail has not been replaced. Delicate reeding and fluting are extensively used as a decorative motif, particularly in the panels surrounding the windows. Rep and chevron patterns also appear in these panels and in the northwest parlor: these were made by gluing hundreds of pre-cut sticks into a gouged channel in the baseboard or window sill.

The dining room contains one of the three original Adamesque mantels still in the Weeden House (the other two being on the unrestored second floor). The dramatic difference in scale and design between the Federal and the Greek Revival is readily apparent when comparing this mantel with those in the front parlors.

The wall and mantel colors present in the Weeden House rooms today are the early nineteenth century colors used in the house. Behind the door in each room and under the entry stair is an unrestored rectangle of plaster that retains all the various paint colors of the house's history. The brown-painted woodwork was actually grained, that is, painted in streaked patterns to imitate various woods. An unrestored example of graining can be seen at the top of the door frame between the northwest parlor and the dining room. It is hoped that the graining will be replicated when finances allow and a skilled grainer is available.

The black paint covered with shiny varnish on the mantels

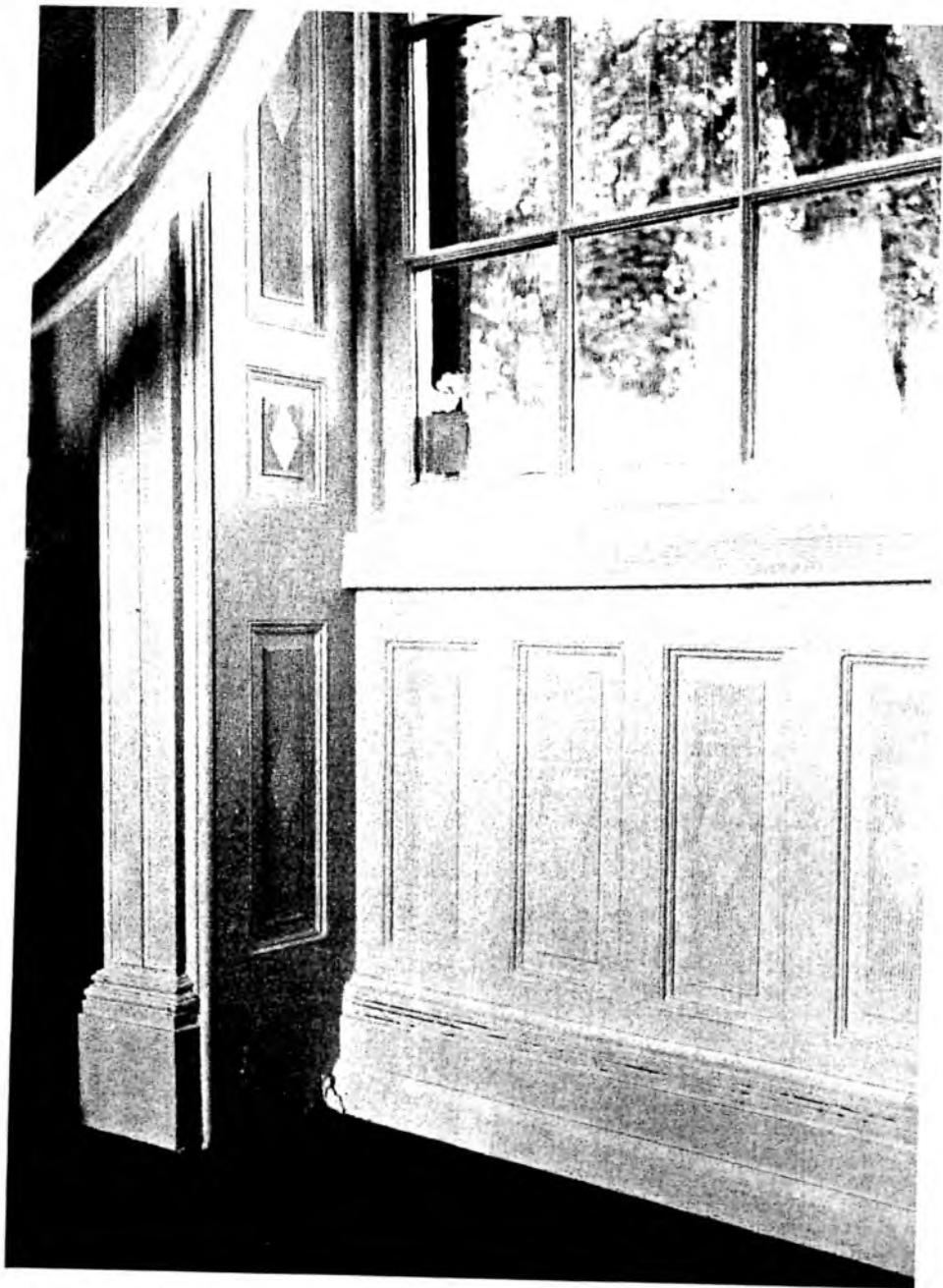
is a replication of the original finish and, moreover, is the most frequent color found on Federal and Greek Revival mantels, a conclusion that is based on the results of scraping numerous mantels. The black color contrasts handsomely with the strong Adamesque colors, such as the deep pink found in the dining room. On



This mantel, located on the unrestored second floor of the Weeden House, displays the delicate reeding and fluting that were typical of Federal period decoration.

the lower right side of the mantel in the northeast parlor is an unrestored bit of the original black paint.

The rear stair enters directly into the room above the dining room with no separation, which is a fairly common feature of Federal period houses



This window in the northeast parlor of the Weeden House is elaborately ornamented with a variety of decorative motifs.

in this area. An unusual and attractive detail is the heart cut out design in the end-scrolls of this stair.

In the northeast parlor, bull's-eye corner blocks appear at the top of the door and window frames; decorative corner blocks are unusual in Federal period houses although other examples do exist. However, the backbanded window and door trim found in the other rooms is quite typical for the period.

The Weeden House rooms have no crown molding at the top of the walls, nor does any known Federal period house in this area. Some owners have recently added small modern crown moldings to Federal period rooms in the mistaken belief that it "ought to be there," but it should not. Occasionally however these rooms did have wide wallpaper borders at the top of the walls. In the Weeden dining room, the rose pink wall paint stops short of the ceiling by about eighteen inches, indicating that a wallpaper border once decorated the upper walls of this room.

The nails used in the Weeden House are square cut nails of various sizes made by machine. By the late 1700s most cut nails were made by either water or steam powered machines. Only a few nails of special shape (such as large-headed) were handwrought in the early nineteenth century, which was, after all, the age of the Industrial Revolution.

The baseboards in the Weeden House have no small shoe molds at the floor since shoe molds were a later device. During the Federal period, the baseboard bottoms were scribed to fit any irregularities in the

floor plane, creating a much neater detail than tacked-on shoe molding.

The first floor ceilings are twelve feet five inches high, while those on the second floor are eleven feet one inch high. The house may appear to be completely symmetrical on the front, but it is not: the room on the left of the entry is two feet wider than the room on the right (21' 10" versus 19' 10"). In fact, very few of these old houses that appear to be mathematically symmetrical really are--our eyes deceive us into thinking they are because that is what we expect.

WEEDEN HOUSE SITE

The original kitchen was a separate structure located about thirty feet from the rear door. This separation kept kitchen heat and smells out of the house in the summer and lessened the risk of fire. However some Federal period houses in Huntsville did have cooking fireplaces in the main house, normally in a half-sunken ground floor.

An 1861 map of Huntsville shows that there were several outbuildings with the Weeden House; an 1871 "Bird's-Eye-View" map shows how these buildings were shaped. Their uses are not known, but one must have housed horses and conveyances and another would have been the "necessary."

The Weeden House is said to have had an iron fence at the time of the Civil War, but probably the original fence was of wooden pickets, a more common type of fencing in 1819.

The 1819 Maria Howard Weeden House is a fine and almost un-

altered example of Federal period domestic architecture. By studying it, we can gain general insights about Huntsville lifestyles in 1819 and specific insights about the life and art of Maria Howard Weeden in the

late nineteenth century. But more importantly, we can learn to understand our own times--for historic architecture helps us to evaluate our own times within the greater historical context to which we all belong.



Remembering Harvie

...I know of no single individual more important to the progress of Judson College in this decade than [Harvie]....His work...[is] invested in the lives of young women....

David E. Potts, President Judson College
Marion, Alabama

Shortly after moving into an old house, I had the privilege of seeing Harvie P. Jones give one of his famous slide presentations. On the screen suddenly appeared a picture of our banister. I nudged the lady next to me and proudly announced, "That's our banister!" just as Harvie said: "Now this is an example of poor workmanship."

Dot Johnson, Huntsville

...Harvie's legacy, the preservation movement he so carefully nurtured and so staunchly protected, is a living testament to his selfless commitment to safeguard our historic structures.

Kelly Cooper Schrimsher, Huntsville

Introduction

The following two interviews of Harvie's friends and coworkers are from information first presented January 26, 1999.

Billy Herrin Remembers his Friend, Harvie P. Jones

Interview by Maureen F. Drost

Architect Billy Herrin remembers his late partner and the historic preservationist Harvie P. Jones as a methodical man. Billy first related some of these stories about Harvie at the first annual Harvie P. Jones Preservation Series at EarlyWorks, a hands-on history learning center that is part of Alabama Constitution Village.

"Yet at first blush Harvie's office looked like a yard sale of old architectural parts. There would be bricks. There would be pieces of wood and joinery and old nails and hardware, but it all had a particular place. He had like a little nest back there. With a little hammer and a lot of little tacks, he would put his T-square in one place and then he would put an erasure shield in another place and then he would put a little notebook in another." Billy said that Harvie put these tools of his profession within reach, "kind of like a cockpit in an airplane."

"Harvie could sit down and visualize a complete set of drawings ahead of time. I've never seen anybody else who do this. He would start drawing on the left hand side of the sheet and just draw to the right hand side." (According to Billy, the usual sequence is to make a series of studies for architectural renderings followed by overlays, more studies, and, of course, erasures.) "Harvie was a talented draftsman, and he used the traditional tools he had tacked up in his office."

Computers never appealed to Harvie. Billy recalls buying six computers, giving one to his partner. Billy encouraged Harvie to practice on the computer for a few weeks then bring it back to the office so it could be connected to the network. "This was a Friday. On Monday, Harvie brought it back and said, 'I'm not the least bit interested in that thing. Let somebody else do it.' He didn't even break the seal on the box."

"It was the Constitution Hall Park project about 1970 that really got Harvie into preservation. It was just like he had an awakening at that

point, and after that he knew that was what he wanted to do. He became truly consumed in preservation. And this was not just an eight-hour-a-day job. This was a seven-day-a-week, 365-days-a-year job.”

Harvie and Dr. Frances Roberts spent a year of research and many weekends photographing houses of the period—those that best illustrated Huntsville in 1819. Other out buildings on the various grounds such as kitchens and barns were also photographed. Contractors for the original Constitution Hall Park used these photographs as well as architectural drawings and specifications.

Harvie and Billy worked as partners more than thirty years in the firm Jones & Herrin Architecture/Interior Design. “I am sure I am a better architect for having been around Harvie,” says Billy. “He was a purist and an extremely honest and fair person who always put the client above everyone and always put the aesthetics above everything.”



Historical Gardening with Harvie P. Jones

Interview by Maureen F. Drost

Harvilee Harbarger is one of fourteen founders of the Huntsville-Madison County Botanical Garden. Harvilee and her daughter, Julie Stephens, own and operate the highly respected horticultural and landscaping company Harbarger Design. As a gift to the people of the area, Harvilee and Julie planned the first thirty-five acres and the initial roads for the garden. For more than thirty years, Harvilee collaborated on projects with Harvie P. Jones.

Q: When did you and Harvie begin working together?

A: Harvie started working with his uncle, Carl T. Jones, at G.W. Jones & Sons (a civil engineering company), and that was my first workplace.

As teenagers, this was before coffee breaks; you went to work in the morning, then you had lunch, and you went back to work. So being a teenager, you naturally liked to kinda goof off just a little bit.

Carl Grote was working with us at that time. He worked out on the survey crew. When he would come into the office, we would goof off. But Harvie never wavered. He sat at his drawing table and worked and worked.

Q: How would you describe Harvie's talents and personality?

A: He was just born talented as far as the (architectural) drawing part goes. He loved Huntsville. He had a sense of place and family. Harvie and Billy Herrin were both very kind to me. Harvie was dedicated, loyal, and a stickler for perfection.

Q: What major historic preservation projects did you and Harvie work on?

A: Constitution Hall Park was probably the biggest and most in-depth restoration we did. All the plans had to represent the period. Quite a bit of research went into the project. Other restorations included Burritt Museum & Park, the Huntsville Depot Museum, and the Weeden House Museum. We also worked on the beautification of downtown Huntsville in the early 1970s.

Q: How did you learn about details for the gardens of the various historical periods?

A: I would read old letters. I also did some interviews with visitors to the Huntsville area during earlier times. In my research about the Weeden House, for example, I read a letter from a lady who once lived there. She wrote that the seven buds of the Seven Sisters Rose always graced the Christmas table.

Q: What did 19th century Huntsvillians plant around their homes?

A: Garden plants, including the sweetpea and the iris. Flowering and fruit-bearing trees, including the dogwood and apples, pears, peaches, and plums. Medicinal plants like rabbit tobacco, which was used for treating asthma; but people also smoked it, and coriander, parsley and sage to flavor foods, Shrubs like the holly and the boxwood. Home-owners of the 1800s would spread linens across the boxwoods to dry, so the sheets would need less ironing. The original Constitution Hall had a vegetable garden on its grounds.

Q: Does Huntsville have a successor to Harvie P. Jones?

A: We're going to miss him. We'll have someone eventually but not really. He was "Mr. Restoration." What he did will be ageless. He brought houses back from ruin.

Interviewer Maureen F. Drost, a free-lance writer formerly with the Huntsville Times, has won numerous local and state awards for her writing on mental health. Her Associated Press award is for an article about the 1989 tornado featuring a hero who saved children at Jones Valley School. Maureen grew up in Huntsville where she was graduated from Huntsville High School. She has a BS from Auburn University where she majored in English and minored in journalism.



Remembering Harvie

When we were building our walk-in fireplace in our Walker Avenue house, I was horrified to see that the firebrick was white. It ruined the whole appearance of the fireplace; and I thought, "I can't live with that." I made one of many phone calls to Harvie, who said: "I'll tell you what we did at Constitution Hall Park. We stained the firebrick with an oil-based mahogany stain." He actually told me what color to get and where to get it. And then he said: "If you want it to look used, we can mal-adjust a blowtorch and smoke up the brick." I did stain the brick, but we didn't use the blowtorch.

We did the same thing in our gas log insert in the great room, because that firebrick was white too, and Harvie said we could use the same stain.

Dale Rhoades, Huntsville

Working with Harvie P. Jones

David Hay

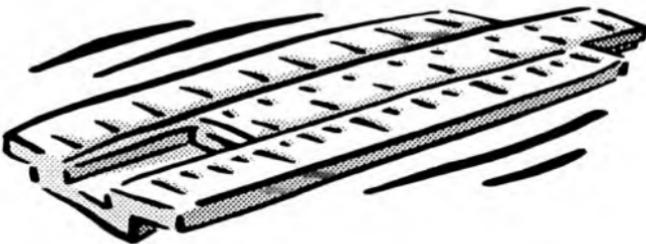
Harvie had a work ethic I have always admired.

He was often in the office when I arrived and still there when I left. I remember one afternoon he passed through the lobby of Jones & Herrin Architecture/Interior Design on a Friday afternoon at 4:55 and explained to several employees who were standing around: "I'm leaving a little early today." This was typical of his attitude towards work.

He always sat on a beautiful wooden stool instead of a chair and did all his drawings by hand, with ruler, pencil, and eraser, and still did his calculations on slide rule. (I looked into his room one day and saw him bent over something with his hand just flying; I looked closer and he was using a slide rule like I would use a calculator. Harvie had no use for modern gadgets.)

Harvie had a wind-up alarm clock with bell so that he wouldn't miss any meetings. We would be working away on our computers and his alarm would ring out in the office startling us all and off he would fly. He was a classic individual, true to himself and the historical architecture he loved.

David Hay, Huntsville native, is a partner in Hay Buchanan Architects. He has an AB in English Literature and an MS in Architecture from Mississippi State University. He worked at Jones & Herrin Architecture/Interior Design for several years and Crow and Associates before starting his own firm.



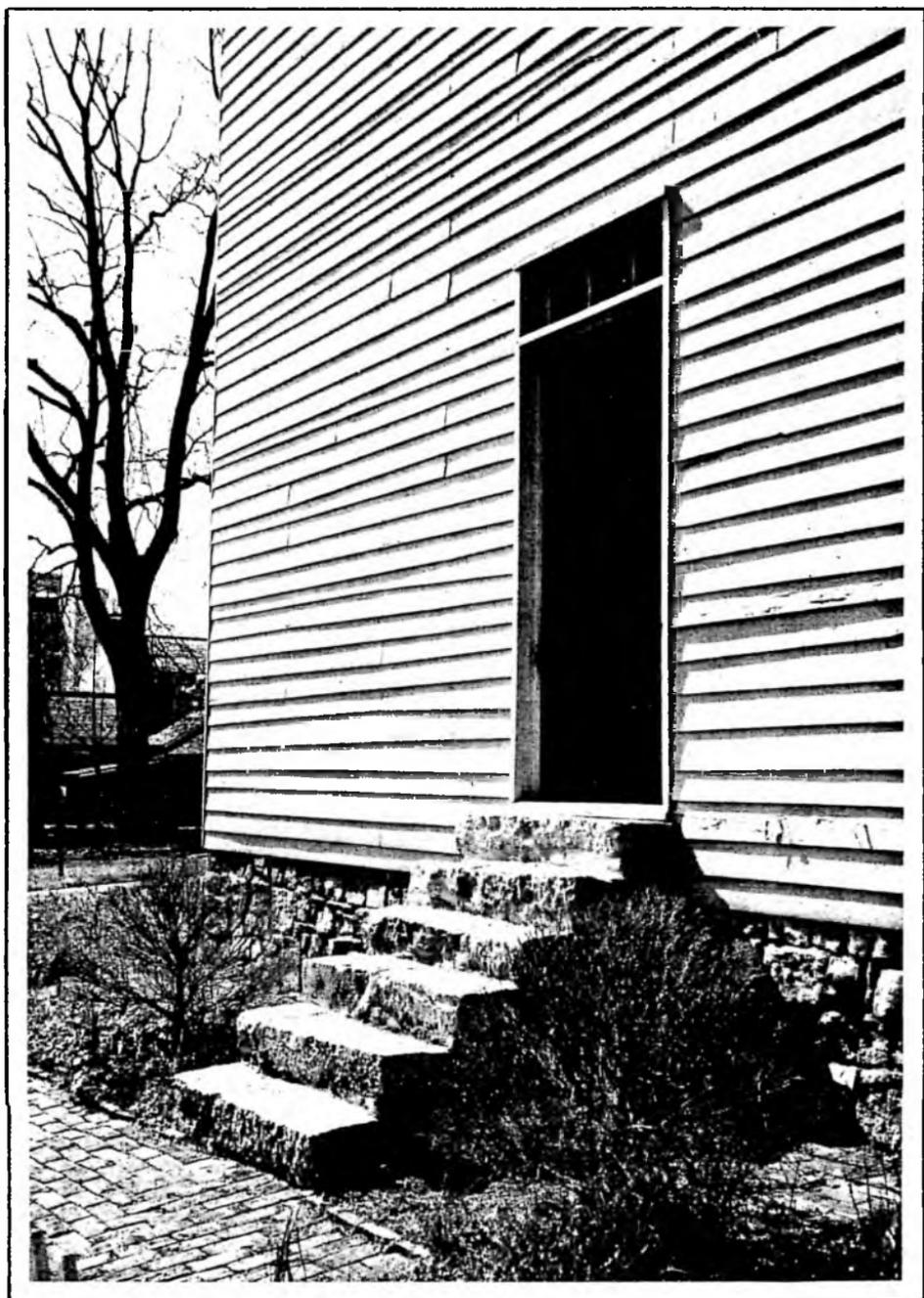
Constitution Hall Park

Introduction

Constitution Hall Park, now Constitution Village, is Huntsville's great tribute to the United States Bicentennial. That celebration of our nation's birth gave rise to many projects, none worthier or more enduring than the complex of sixteen painstakingly reconstructed structures located on the hallowed ground where delegates met to debate and approve Alabama's first constitution, in 1819.

The style of these buildings is what might be called *frontier Federal* or *Federal vernacular*. Research by Dr. Frances Roberts, Sarah Huff Fisk, and other members of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society "established the size, plan, shape, and location" of the buildings. Then Harvie P. Jones drew the plans and supervised the contractors as full-sized, three-dimensional structures emerged from the huge accumulation of data. On close inspection, each building is a treasure trove of period form and detail, from the placement of a chimney to the projection of the roof ridges away from the prevailing wind.

Begun in the early 1970s, Constitution Hall Park was an ongoing project for nearly a decade and is Harvie's first major endeavor in historic preservation. As he noted in the *Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, No. 3, Spring, 1982, most of the reconstructed buildings had "a direct relationship to the Constitutional Convention." Today, even the Library and the Sheriff Neal house/office—not considered so directly related to constitutional activities—seem intimately revealing of the lives and aspirations of those who lived or visited here, and perhaps witnessed the exciting events that led to statehood. And on an early spring morning, when traffic is still and the streets foggy, the unassuming simplicity of these historical recreations still breathes the air of 1819, of statehood, of commerce and land sales and newspapers and stables, and, yes, a scent of old roses and a faint whiff of a backyard privy.



SIDE ENTRANCE TO CONSTITUTION HALL

Constitution Hall Park

ARCHITECTURAL NOTES

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

INTRODUCTION

Constitution Hall Park is a reconstruction of seven buildings (and their outbuildings)—16 structures in all—of the period 1805-1819 in downtown Huntsville, Alabama. The purpose of the Park is to commemorate the 1819 Constitutional Convention held on this site, at which Alabama entered the Union. There being only 50 such locations in the United States makes this site of state and national significance. The buildings are reconstructed as accurately as historical information, architectural research, present-day technology, and economics allow. By visiting these diverse types of early nineteenth century structures, the visitor will gain an insight to the times and events of 1819 that no amount of reading or lecturing can impart.

All of the reconstructed buildings existed on this site in 1819, and together they present a wide variety: cabinet-maker's shop (Constitution Hall), two lawyer's offices, library, newspaper office, sheriff's office, residence, service rooms, carriage house, stables, and "necessary." All of the structures—except the Sheriff Neal house and office and the Library—had a direct relationship to the Constitutional Convention.

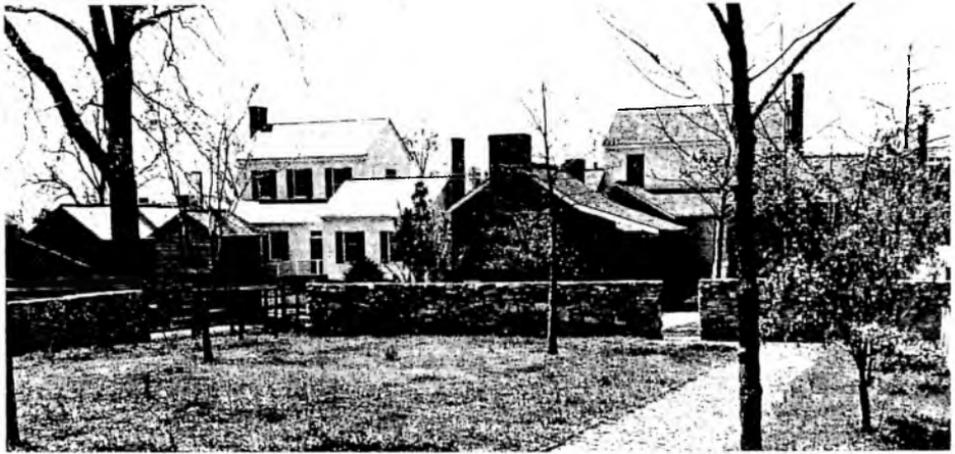
The architecture of the buildings in Constitution Hall Park illustrates "vernacular" (that is, not high-style) examples

of the Federal period, which is generally 1780 to the mid 1830s. The term "Federal period" means architecture of the early years of the American Federation. Federal period architecture is a neo-classical style which blends influences from the style of Robert Adam (Adamesque) with those of the Palladian-Georgian tradition. While the basic Palladian-Georgian building forms are retained in most early nineteenth century vernacular work, the Adamesque influence is evident in a new lightness and delicacy of details and decorative elements such as moldings, mantels, and stairs.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Much research on the Constitutional Convention and its site was done in the late 1960s by Sarah Huff Fisk, Dr. Frances Roberts and others of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society. This research established the size, plan shape, and location of the various structures and whether they were of brick or frame construction. In the mid 1970s, the discovery by James Record of an 1871 "bird's-eye view" drawing of Huntsville confirmed the three-dimensional shapes of the buildings fronting Madison Street. These shapes had been deduced by the architects from research completed in 1970, and it was gratifying to find that the correct conclusions had been drawn.

The architects (Jones & Herrin,



A.I.A., Huntsville) spent several thousand hours between 1970 and 1981 researching and documenting Federal period buildings here and elsewhere. Dozens of Federal period buildings were visited, photographed, measured, and examined. The architects also collected and studied a library of several hundred books and articles on the Federal period for information about such details as hardware, timber framing joinery, sawing methods, and nail manufacture.

In 1980 the American Institute of Architects Alabama Council presented an award to the Constitution Hall Park project for the thoroughness of its research and accuracy of execution. The City of Huntsville presented a similar resolution the same year, and the Park won a third award in 1982 from the North Alabama Council of the A.I.A.

RECONSTRUCTION PHILOSOPHY

The objective adopted by the architects in the reconstruction was that a local historic source be used for every architectural detail. For example, while research indicated the size, location, shape and material of the Neal House, nothing is known of the details of its stair. Therefore the Neal House stair details have been carefully reproduced from the Federal period stair in the rear of the Mastin House at 516 Franklin Street. This

same technique has been followed throughout, down to the smallest moldings or sash-muntin profiles, and even to the spacing and types of nails.

A second part of the philosophy for reconstruction was that the buildings be frankly presented as reconstructions—that there be no attempt to delude visitors into thinking these are genuine Federal period structures. Therefore no age or wear effects are included. All concealed work is modern. A sign at the entrance announces that the buildings are reconstructions.

Research on building placement has been followed with these exceptions dictated by site restrictions:

1. Whereas the 1861 map and the existing foundations show that the front of the Boardman and Neal buildings sat directly on the street right-of-way, this was not now practicable as the house steps would extend completely through the sidewalk (which did not exist in 1819). These two building groups have been moved about ten feet from the street right-of-way line. Excavations during construction uncovered the foundations of both of these buildings and confirmed the accuracy of the 1861 map. It is also likely that the Clay and Constitution Hall buildings sat directly on the street right-of-way.

2. The Clay building actually stood just north of the alley instead of just south of it, where it has been reconstructed. Inasmuch as the Clay building was very important to the Constitutional Convention, and the original site was not available, the building was shifted to the south edge of the alley.

3. Two other houses were on the site in 1819 (the foundations of one on Gates Avenue near the center of the block were uncovered.) These were not reconstructed due to economic limitations and because they were not known to be involved with the Constitutional Convention.

SITE FEATURES

Walks through the Park connect the various buildings, and of course, these walks would not have existed in 1819. Nor would the grass have been mowed since lawn mowers were not invented until the latter 1800s. The grass would have grown freely and tall in 1819, perhaps with a few areas sickle-cut to several inches height. The required handicapped ramps are frankly treated as modern intrusions and are built of plywood. The historic brick walks extend under these ramps.

The three types of picket fences used are based on late 1800s photographs of Federal period Huntsville houses and on extant examples at Federal period houses in Mooresville. It is not possible to definitely state that these fences are original to their Federal period houses. A mid-nineteenth century painting of Huntsville's Big Spring by William Frye shows split-rail fences of the type seen at the center of Constitution Hall Park. This painting also includes a board fence that appears to be similar to the one at the Park's north boundary.

The patterns used for the brick walks—herringbone and running half-bond—can still be seen in Huntsville's two historic districts.

The plant materials, as selected by landscape architect Harvillee Harbarger, are types found in 1819 Huntsville. In a few cases, hybrids, which have the same appearance as the native plants, have been used. Heavy foundation plantings—an invention of the 1920s—are not used.

BOARDMAN LAW OFFICE, ALABAMA REPUBLICAN, AND LIBRARY



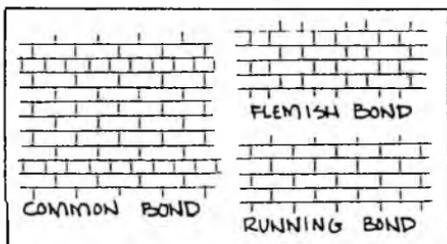
EXTERIOR DETAILS

RESEARCH

The plan, material and form of the Boardman group, Library and Neal group are known from the 1861 and 1871 maps and the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of the late 1800s. The plan shapes were confirmed by archaeological and foundation excavations. A description written by a member of a touring drama group (which presented plays, probably on the second floor of the Walker Allen Cabinet Shop) provided the main basis for the Constitution Hall building along with studies of similar nineteenth century structures in other areas. The form of the Clay building is based on old photographs of the Federal period Spottswood House and its similar neighbors on South Side Square.

BRICKWORK

Most Federal period brick structures had Flemish bond brickwork in a high-quality brick on the front and common bond in a cheaper, irregular brick on the other faces. Thus the Library has Flemish bond with beaded or "grapevine" tooled mortar joints on the front and common bond with casually troweled joints on the side and rear. Some brick fronts of Federal period buildings have all running bond; that is, none of the bricks are turned endways (headers) to tie the face bricks to the inner bricks. The face brick ties

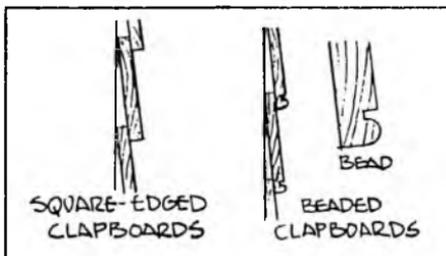


consist of occasional courses of eight-inch square bricks which present a normal-sized face but which extend eight inches back into the inner bricks. The Clay building has this feature, with the usual common bond on the side and rear walls, which has an unattractive header-course about every seven courses. Brick walls of

Federal period houses here almost all had pencilled (quarter inch wide white paint stripes) joints to accentuate and visually straighten the joints; this has not been done in Constitution Hall Park because the front of the only appropriate brick building, the Library, has beaded tooled mortar joints.

CLAPBOARDS

In the early nineteenth century it was not thought to be important on most buildings that clapboards be evenly spaced or straight, as is amply proved by many extant examples. Therefore the clapboards on the Park buildings range from quite (but not exactly) regular on the Neal House, the most refined structure, to somewhat more irregular on the Boardman building, to sometimes quite irregular on the Constitution Hall building, which was an unpretentious commercial building that was thought so little of as to be demolished in 1821, two years after it housed the Constitutional Convention. The better buildings of the period used beaded clapboards, as does the Neal House.



FOUNDATIONS Federal period buildings in this area usually had chiseled limestone foundations which sometimes extended partly above the ground and then transitioned into brick. In some cases these foundation stones were very large—as much as 18 inches square and 13 feet long and weighing about 4,500 pounds. Apparently the cutting labor was more onerous than the hauling labor. The stones were usually roughly coursed, or random ashlar, and were infrequently precisely chiseled and coursed.

CHIMNEYS

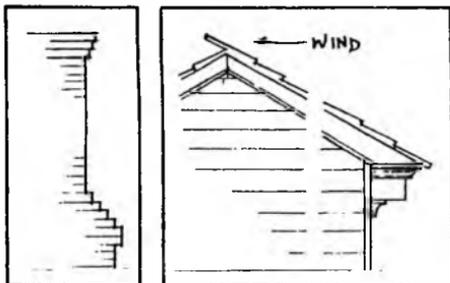
A look at the various chimney-caps shows seven types present in Constitution Hall Park. A consistent Federal period chimney detail is the projection of two brick-courses at the chimney-shoulders, about one inch out from the chimney shaft sides. On the Federal period clap-boarded buildings (Neal and Boardman), the chimneys typically stand against the outside face of the wall and stand free of the wall entirely at the portion above the chimney-shoulder. This is for fire protection since the brick flues were unlined and could develop holes where mortar joints deteriorated. A hole in the brick flue could allow flames from a chimney fire into the attic. Separating the flue from the gable wall would prevent this, and it results in an attractive appearance as well.

SHINGLES

Several wooden handmade shingles known to be of the Federal period have been salvaged from attics and studied. Researchers tell us, and observation confirms, that these shingles were made by splitting them off with an ell-handled knife called a "fro," then smoothing them with a drawknife. The shingles thus are relatively thin, and the surface is fairly smooth, so that they closely resemble a modern sawn shingle in texture. For this reason, modern shingles have been used in Constitution Hall Park, since the only alternative would be to make them all by hand—an extremely costly option which was not available.

ROOF RIDGES

Old drawings and photographs show that ridges of wooden shingle roofs had a row of shingles that projected about four inches to help waterproof the ridge joint. This is unlike twentieth century practice where shingles do not project at the ridges but are overlapped along the ridge. Furthermore, these early ridges usually projected away from the prevailing wind, which here is from the west and south. Therefore the Constitution Hall shingle ridges project away from the west and



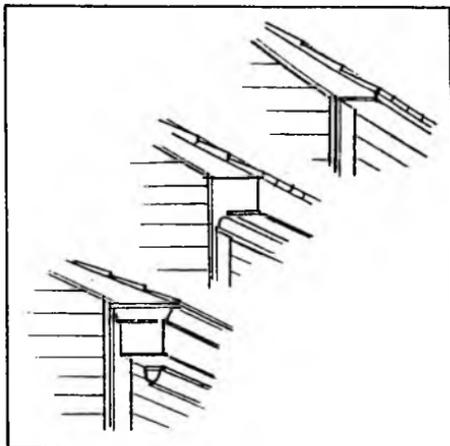
south, following this sensible early nineteenth century practice.

EAVES

Most Federal period buildings had boxed roof eaves of some design, ranging from a simple flat soffit-board (Neal carriage house), to a simple box with a crown-mold under it (Library and Clay buildings), to a quite elaborate boxed cornice with a crown-mold on the eave and under the box (Neal, Boardman, and Constitution Hall). Some outbuilding eaves were unboxed with the rafter ends exposed. The south kitchen eaves at the Boardman building have this detail.

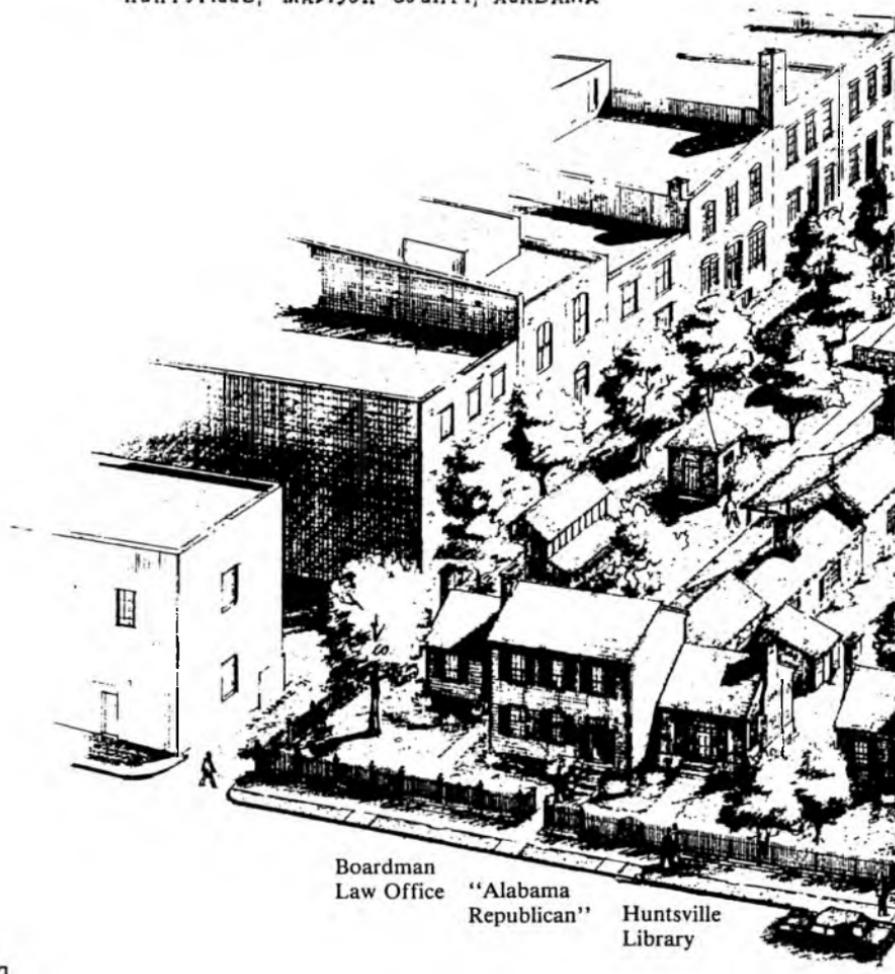
GABLES

Most Federal period gables had no projecting eaves. A fascia board with a beaded bottom edge ran up the rake (slope) of the roof, covering the top edge of the clapboard or brick wall. Frequently (but not always) this raking fascia was tapered to be narrowest at the peak of the roof.



Constitution Hall Park

HUNTSVILLE, MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA



Boardman
Law Office "Alabama
Republican" Huntsville
Library



CLAY LAW OFFICE & POST OFFICE

COLORS

The circa 1850 Frye painting of Huntsville tells us several valuable things since it includes color, fences, and utilitarian buildings of a type now rare. It shows us that service buildings were frequently unpainted clapboard, that vertical board siding was sometimes used on out-buildings (Post Office stable), and that white was a frequent clapboard color. Numerous Federal period clapboard structures here have been scraped to determine the original paint colors. All but two have had white clapboards, or actually a near-white since refined white pigment was not available until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Therefore most of the clapboard at Constitution Hall Park is near-white in color as is the trim.

OUTBUILDINGS

The Post Office stable is patterned after a building in the Frye painting. The details of the Neal carriage house are like those on the early 1800s waterworks building shown in both the Frye painting and an historic photograph, and also like

a carriage-shed shown behind the waterworks building in the same two sources. The Neal necessary is a reproduction of the one formerly at the 1820s Bone-Wilbourn House, which, based on its details, was possibly original to that house. The pyramidal-roofed "tool house" behind the Boardman building is a type shown twice in a Civil War view of Adams Street published in **Harper's**.

WALL VENTS

Three types of local Federal period foundation and wall vents are used in Constitution Hall Park. The most common type consists of vertical wooden square bars twisted 45 degrees to the wall plane, set in a beaded wooden frame (Boardman, Library, and Neal House). A second type consists of small openings left in the brick foundation wall by omitting bricks (Clay building and Boardman service wing). The other type is like the wooden bar type first discussed, except the bars are horizontal (Neal dairy). Some clapboard buildings had no foundation vents, as is illustrated in Constitution Hall.

PORCHES

Note that none of the Constitution Hall Park structures has a front porch. Indeed, the steps proceed directly up to the front door without even a landing at the top. While some Federal period townhouses had original small roofed entry porches, the evidence is that many did not. Since both the Boardman and Neal buildings were originally built with their front walls directly on the street right-of-way line and the 1861 map showed no front porches, the correct conclusion is undoubtedly that these structures only had front steps. These entry steps were frequently wood but sometimes stone; both types are used at Constitution Hall Park. The wrought iron foot-scrapers at the Boardman, Neal and Library buildings would be a necessity with the muddy unpaved streets of 1819.

BOARD DOORS

Outbuilding doors are usually com-

posed of vertical boards scabbed together with two or three horizontal boards and clinched cut nails. The board doors on the Boardman building tool house and the root cellar behind the Library consist of two layers of opposing-diagonal planks nailed together with hundreds of nails set in a careful rectilinear pattern. There are many more nails than are structurally necessary, and it can only be deduced that they served a decorative purpose as well as a functional one.

WINDOWS The brick buildings at Constitution Hall Park have heavy wooden lintels spanning over the window and door openings, usually three bricks high (about eight inches) but sometimes only two. The window sills are of thick wood. No Federal period brick sills have been found. The lintels and sills were frequently heart red cedar for rot resistance, and most are as sound today as in 1819.

Nineteenth century commercial structures usually had solid shutters (that is, they had no bladed openings) for security (Constitution Hall, Clay, and Boardman law office). These shutters had heavy diagonal iron bars which were lapped over the closed shutters and pinned on the inside. The Neal and Boardman buildings have Venetian blinds, so termed in nineteenth century writings, which are bladed and are what are commonly called shutters today. Many of these blinds had adjustable blades on either the lower half or both halves, while some had only fixed blades. Vertical board shutters are used on the out-buildings.

Windows in Federal period clapboard buildings usually had very narrow exterior frames—simply the outer edge of the frame-board (about 1 1/8 to 2 inches thick) with the clapboards butted to it (Boardman House). Frequently these frames had rounded outer edges as is done on the Sheriff Neal office. Some Federal period clapboard buildings had wide beaded and backbanded frames on their outer sash faces; this detail is used on the

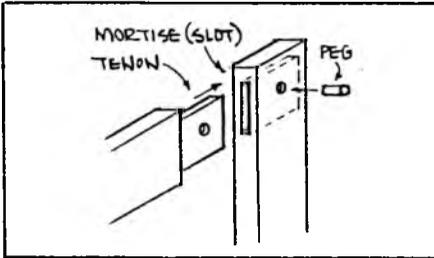
Neal main residence.

The window sashes were single-sliding—that is, the top sash was fixed shut, and the bottom sash slid up and down. The movable bottom sash of a typical single-sliding up and down sash was frequently shorter than the top fixed sash (Boardman and Neal houses). Window panes were usually ten by twelve inches, but were sometimes eight by ten inches. Pane arrangements varied but the most common were 12/12, 9/9, 6/6, 12/8, and 9/6.

The glass in the Constitution Hall Park buildings is an accurate reproduction of the 1819 hand-blown cylinder glass which has ripples and bubbles as a result of its manufacturing process. This reproduction glass is made in France, with some panes in the Neal buildings coming from an 1880s hotel near Huntland, Tennessee.

INTERIOR DETAILS

FRAMING The exposed frame interiors of the utilitarian structures such as the stables are based on the framing methods of the numerous extant Federal period buildings in north Alabama. Framing members were typically spaced about (not exactly) two feet on center. By the late nineteenth century, 16 inches on center was the usual spacing as it is today, although now the members are much thinner being only about 1 1/2 inches thick. Connections between framing members were mortised, tenoned and pegged. At the roof ridge, the rafters typically met in a half-lap and were pegged, rather than being nailed to a ridge-board as in today's practice. The

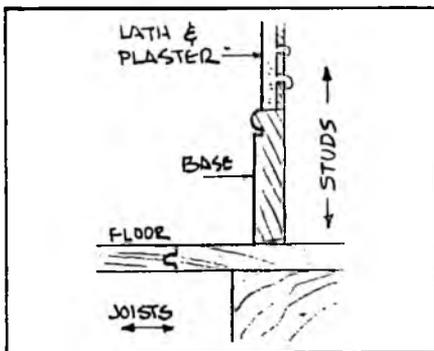


use of mortises and tenons necessitated prefabrication of the members on the ground, so the connections were given matching Roman numerals on the corresponding members for orderly erection. The Roman numerals were used because they are easily made with a chisel. These framing details involving the smaller framing members can be seen in the Constitution Hall Park outbuildings, which are all of a small size.

WALL FINISHES

Several local Federal period buildings indicate that plaster was reserved for better rooms, and wide, thin planking covered the walls and ceilings of more austere spaces. Most larger nineteenth century commercial structures observed had planked interiors. Therefore in Constitution Hall Park, the utilitarian lean-to rooms, some service rooms, and some commercial spaces such as Constitution Hall have wide-planked ceilings and walls.

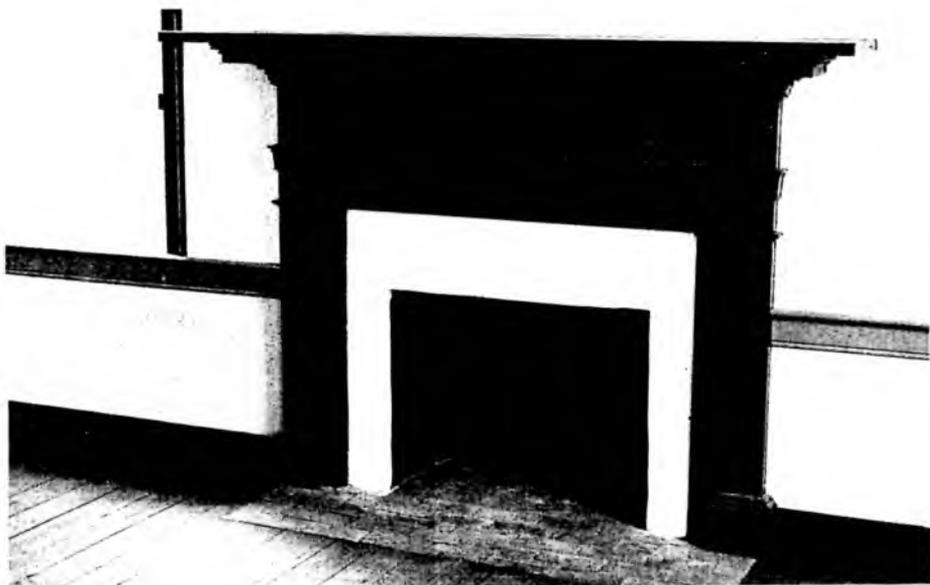
Note that plastered surfaces in the Constitution Hall Park buildings are not perfectly planar, but gently undulate to



follow the imperfect brick walls or hand-split wooden laths on irregular studs. A visit to unrestored early nineteenth century structures will illustrate the prevalence of this characteristic. Buildings of the Federal period have a charming irregularity, which may or may not be deliberate, but the result is the same: they have none of the mechanical dryness typical of dimensionally perfect modern structures.

In the Federal period it was the practice to first install all the wooden trim in a room, such as baseboards, window and

MANTEL IN THE SHERIFF NEAL RESIDENCE



door trim. After this, the plaster was applied to the handsplit whiteoak lath or, in the case of masonry buildings, directly onto the inner surface of the solid brick walls. Therefore the plaster laps onto the edges of the wooden trim so that the trim is slightly recessed into the plaster, giving the trim a more delicate, thin appearance.

MANTELS

There were no known architects in Huntsville before about 1820, and the Constitution Hall Park buildings are therefore of vernacular Federal period design based on the builder's and owner's memories, skills and desires, supplemented by reference to architectural handbooks. The Adamesque mantels found in Constitution Hall Park undoubtedly are adaptations of designs found in many architectural handbooks widely available in the period, such as **The American Builders' Companion** first published in 1806 by the architect Asher Benjamin. These mantels are of widely varying design, from simple to elaborate. The most elaborate in the Park are found in the Neal House and the Boardman building, which probably was built as a house and later accommodated the **Alabama Republican** newspaper offices on its first floor. The more elaborate of these Adamesque mantels combine many small moldings and deep offsets for a light and graceful, yet flamboyant effect.



COLORS

Many local mantels dating from the Federal period have been scraped to determine the original paint color. Almost all have been found to be glossy black, the gloss achieved with varnish either coated over the black paint or mixed into it. If this surprises, consider also that the interior paint colors found in Federal period houses are consistently deep and rich, such as burgundy, rose, turquoise, burnt orange, gold, and forest-green. Meek off-whites are the exception rather than the rule. Black mantels beautifully complement these rich colors.

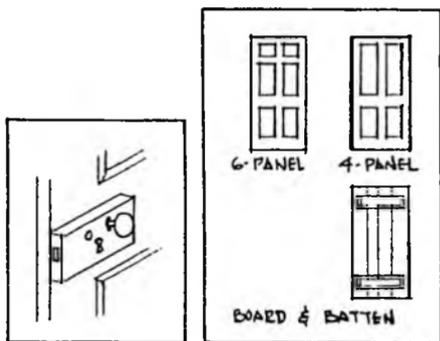
MOLDINGS

Some area Federal period houses had wood-paneled wainscots, but most had only a wooden chair rail which was an extension of the window sill. The Neal and Boardman main rooms and the Library have these chair rails, but their service rooms do not. Nor do the Clay or Constitution Hall buildings have them. The most typical baseboard of the Federal period was a poplar board with a bead-mold along its top edge, scribed along its bottom edge to fit the irregularities of the wooden floor. No shoe mold was used, such as is common today. No instance of a Federal period house in the Tennessee Valley having original room cornices has been found by the writer; consequently, none have been employed in Constitution Hall Park.

DOORS

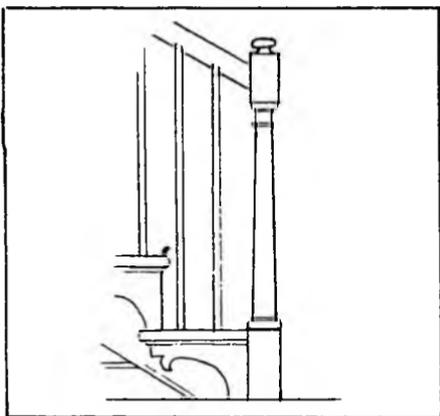
The three patterns of Federal period doors commonly found are six-panel, four-panel, and board-and-batten. The paneled doors have either beveled-edge or flush beaded-edge panels on one face while the opposite face displays flat recessed panels. Usually (but not always) the beveled or beaded side was placed on the more prominently viewed side—facing the hall when closed and facing the room when opened against the wall.

The paneled doors were very thin, the interior doors being usually 1 1/8 inches thick. The exterior doors were sometimes



up to 1 1/4 inches thick, but still thinner than a modern interior door. Since rimlocks (box-locks screwed to the surface of the door) were used and the door thickness did not have to accommodate an internal mortised lock, there was no reason to make the doors thicker. Federal period board-and-batten doors were usually 1 1/8 inches thick and were used in utilitarian spaces. Most had smooth hand-planed faces, but some rough sash-sawn faces have been found.

The majority of the rimlocks found on Federal period buildings here were "Carpenter" brand (manufactured in England beginning about 1790 by Carpenter & Company) and featured very small and gracefully shaped brass knobs. The reproduction Carpenter locks in the Neal and Boardman buildings were made locally by Jim Batson, and the others were produced by Ball & Ball.



STAIRS

While Federal period houses of the vernacular type usually found in this area were very simple, they were often exuberantly elaborate in the design of their mantels and their stairs. Most Federal period stairs have decorative scrolls on the sides of their steps in patterns. The newels are most frequently miniature Tuscan columns capped by a square section to receive the rail and an oval-sectioned circular top. The balusters are typically rectangular and set two to a step.

FLOORS

Most Federal period wooden floors were a dense, hard, virgin growth pine, although poplar and ash floors were occasionally used. Wooden floor boards were about 1 1/8 inches thick, tongued and grooved, and usually five to six inches wide. Attic and utilitarian room flooring may be 12 to 16 inches wide. For the floors in the Neal and Boardman buildings, Library, and Sheriff's Office, very dense pine was obtained from a salvaged late nineteenth century mill building which closely approximates 1819 flooring. In the Constitution Hall and Clay buildings, modern "dense" pine had to be used; it is less than satisfactory. These last named commercial buildings have, appropriately, wide floor boards of generally 9 to 12 inches.

The idea of sanding and varnishing a wooden floor dates from the post-Civil War Victorian period. Most unrestored Federal period floors appear grayish—said to be a result of scrubbing with sand, bricks, lye and water—and this is the effect that has been used in the Constitution Hall Park buildings. Drawings and paintings from the Federal period of house interiors show that the wooden floors were usually covered in the better houses. The covering was usually wall-to-wall carpeting or straw matting made in yard wide strips sewn together and tacked around the edges of the room. The practice of using oriental rugs on floors is essentially a Victorian one and hence not

appropriate to the Federal period.

Kitchens and basement rooms frequently had brick floors laid directly on the earth in a sand-bed without mortar. The bricks were laid flat and jammed tightly together with sand swept into the joints. Bricks, measuring four by eight inches, were usually laid in a herringbone pattern turned forty-five degrees to the wall, although some brick floors consisted of eight-inch square bricks laid in a half-bond pattern.

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive report has been compiled listing the local historical source of each detail, molding, and paint color of each building and room in Constitution Hall Park. Great efforts have been exerted to make the buildings as accurate as possible. Some of the aspects of early

nineteenth century architecture will surprise many visitors, such as the frequent use of rich, deep paint colors and the prevalence of black-painted mantels. However, these and other details are supported by the examination of numerous Federal period buildings of this area, and if we are surprised by some of the architectural and decorative practices of the early nineteenth century, then we have learned something new, and "learning" about the events and times of the 1819 Constitutional Convention is the purpose of Constitution Hall Park. It is hoped that a visit to the Park will be both a pleasurable and an educational event which will enable the visitor to better understand the present through a better understanding of the past.



HUNTSVILLE
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Introduction

This is an edited reprint of "Letters to the Editor," *Athens News Courier*, December 13, 1998.

Architect gave much to Athens

Dear Editor,

As Donnell House member Dr. Milly Caudle and I attended the funeral of architect Harvie P. Jones at the First Presbyterian Church in Huntsville on December 8, we spoke of the many donated hours that Harvie had spent in helping us in various projects in Athens.

We heard architectural historian Robert Gamble say in eulogy that Harvie was excited over every new architectural find he made and was eager to share it. We heard his cousin Raymond Jones state that Harvie was indeed, as the Huntsville newspaper stated: "a kind and gentle man," except when someone suggested tearing down an old building.

Harvie knew, as do all preservationists, that it is impossible to save every old building; but he certainly did his best to save and to preserve buildings in his native Madison County where one can hardly pass an old structure without seeing Harvie's influence including his donated services in the restoration of the old New Market Presbyterian Church, where his family worshiped when he was a child. There was "Oak Place," the home of Huntsville's first architect, George Steele, where Harvie showed the new owners, the East Huntsville Baptist Church, an innovative way to save and use the structure to fit their needs.

Over Alabama, we can see Harvie's influence. I watched with him as a wonderful little Greek Revival house was moved from Greene County to behind "Kirkwood" in Eutaw, Alabama, and restored under Harvie's plans. Then, there is evidence of the many donated hours that Harvie spent in drawing plans for the restoration of the General Joe Wheeler House and grounds in Lawrence County.

In Limestone County, Harvie spent countless hours helping Dr. Caudle in planning the nomination of different historical districts in Athens. We know that he helped immeasurably those in Mooresville restore the 1825 Stage

Coach Inn and other buildings seen at the biannual Mooresville Street Fair in May. And also in Limestone is the 1873 Blackburn house and older log house moved from Pettusville by Karen and Eli Mastich that Harvie helped them to restore. Harvie was not only interested in houses. I accompanied him over Limestone County one day in his search for unusual old barns, which are fast disappearing from the scene.

And I shall never forget that Harvie donated many hours to the Donnell House committee, then a part of the Limestone County Historical Society, in plans to restore the house, which at the time was filled with oil drums, old school desks, and dangerously sagging floors. Only after we raised the money and received a matching grant for the Donnell House restoration, did Harvie charge for his services. He was a perfectionist. "He was [exact-ing] to work with," said Richard "Buzz" Estes, who did many plumbing and heating jobs with Harvie, "[he was more interested in authenticity than in access to a unit,] ... he was a good man." Harvie believed in "de-cency and order," as evidenced in his obsession with picking up trash off the Huntsville streets.

The last time I saw Harvie he was climbing in the loft and examining and photographing every inch of the Joel Eddins house here in Limestone County, believed to be the oldest extant house in the state. Yes, Harvie will be missed in many areas by many in Alabama and in the nation, where he received honors from the American Institute of Architects.

Sincerely,
Faye A. Axford, curator Donnell House

Remembering Harvie

When we heard the sad news [of Harvie P. Jones' death], we felt as if the heartbeat of this community had stopped while we all tried to re-imagine our lives without Harvie's quiet, committed presence. His unfailing help-fulness, his enthusiasm, and his commitment are an example for us all; and his effect on this area and historic preservation will be a permanent one.

Frances and David Robb, Huntsville

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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.

The Historic Huntsville Foundation warehouse is located in the basement of Harrison Brothers Hardware Store and is open 1st & 3rd Saturdays, from 10 until 11:30 a.m. The warehouse accepts donations of architectural items and offers the items at reasonable prices to people restoring Madison County buildings 50 or more years old. Warehouse volunteers can help restorers choose pieces appropriate to their building's time. For more information, call 539-0097.

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