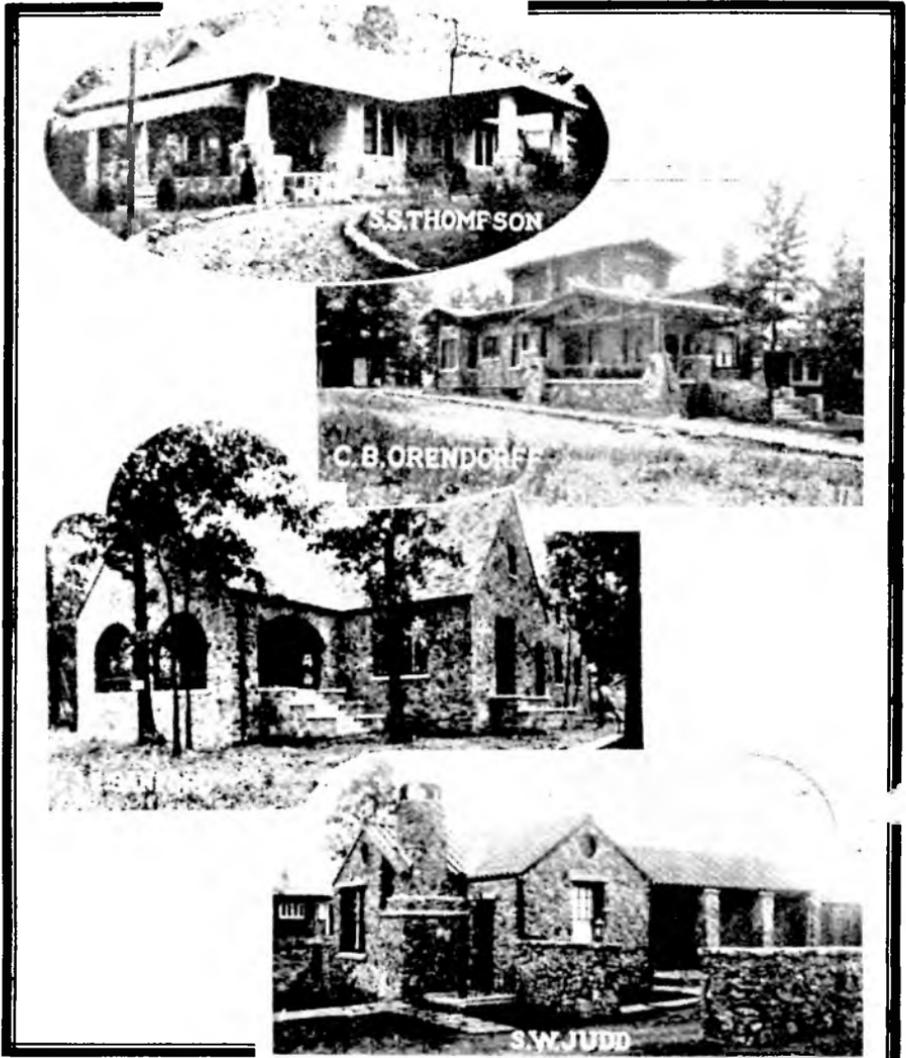


One Dollar



Summer

1980

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE QUARTERLY

Of Local Architecture & Preservation

HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION
MEMBERSHIP PHOTO CONTEST
OF
HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE BUILDINGS

ules:

1. Individual and family HHF members only are eligible to enter.
2. One 2x2 inch color slide to be submitted for each building photographed.
3. All slides become the property of HHF with rights of reproduction. Credit line will be given to photographer if published.
4. Each slide should be marked with building name, photographer, phone number, and date taken.
5. Only the following buildings are eligible for submittal to the contest: -

First Alabama Bank	Clemens House (Huntsville Utilities)
Constitution Hall	Coca Cola House
Oak Place	Morgan-Stockton House *
Train Depot	Corley-Tidmore House *
Church of the Nativity	Bibb-Hutchens House *
Steam Boat Gothic House	Van Valkenburgh-McCauley House *

 - * Do not trespass on private property to make these photographs.
6. Entries must be submitted on or before January 10, 1981 to Historic Huntsville Foundation, Box 786, Huntsville, Alabama 35804.
7. The decision of the judges is final. The award for each building and a grand award for the best photo will be announced in the 1981 Spring Quarterly.
8. Judges and their families shall not be eligible to submit photographs.

Please notify HHF by September 15, 1980 of your intent to enter. Write HHF or call Ira P. Jones 883-5998. Good shooting.

Your Photo Committee

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE QUARTERLY

of Local Architecture and Preservation

Vol. VI, No. 4

Summer, 1980

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from the Editor

One of the deterrents to preservation activity in Alabama is the absence of statewide enabling legislation authorizing the establishment of local preservation commissions and historic districts. Currently each municipality desiring to designate districts and set up a design review board must draft its own local legislation--which can prove a hardship for small towns and rural areas.

Last spring the Alabama Trust submitted a bill to the state legislature that would create such statewide enabling legislation but later withdrew it to allow time for improvements. Since then a group of preservationists from across the state have formed a committee to draw up a new bill to be reintroduced in early 1981.

The proposed bill must address several important concerns to be successful. Many of the state's significant properties are located in rural areas that lack legal controls such as zoning, planning commissions, and building permits. Another concern is that some counties and smaller towns may not have residents with the necessary architectural and/or historical knowledge to make sound judgments on requests normally brought before design review boards. It is vital that these problems be resolved by the proposed legislation so that Alabama's historic districts and sites maintain a high standard and are a credit to the state's preservation program.

The committee is examining the most recent preservation enabling legislation enacted by other states, as well as model bills provided by the National Trust, in order to produce a bill for Alabama that will be general enough to satisfy varying local conditions yet will provide sufficient guidance to ensure that equally high criteria for the conservation of historic properties are met throughout the state.

COVER PHOTO: These are four of the houses that were erected on Monte Sano during the 1920s and published in brochures promoting the mountain as a residential resort.

*Alum Spring on Monte Sano
in the 1890s*



THE ROMANCE AND REALISM OF MONTE SANO

by Frances C. Roberts

Because of the natural beauty of this mountain called Monte Sano, there have been numerous legends and true stories recorded in the annals of local history.

Perhaps the most romantic legend associated with the mountain concerns its name. For thousands of years before white settlers came to claim the land, numerous Indian tribes enjoyed living in the scenic Tennessee Valley. According to legend, an Indian maiden named Monte was torn be-

tween her love for a young white man and an Indian brave to whom she was betrothed by her father, an Indian chieftain. There are two versions of the end of this story. According to an unknown bard who recorded the legend in verse, Monte chose her Indian childhood sweetheart who had pleaded with her to say no to her paleface

Dr. Roberts originally presented this paper at a reunion of CCC workers held Saturday, June 14, 1980, at Monte Sano State Park.

suitor, thus the name, "Monte Sano." ¹ The other ending to the legend is more tragic. According to this version Monte said no to her Indian lover and, to avoid the wrath of her father, she and her paleface suitor leaped to their deaths from Inspiration Point in order to be united in "the happy hunting grounds of the hereafter." ²

Actually the name Monte Sano means "mountain of health" in Italian which goes back to the Latin basis of mont (mountain) sanitos (health). According to tradition, Dr. Thomas Fearn, one of Huntsville's pioneer physicians, gave the mountain its name because it was a healthful area where families could spend their summers and escape various types of illnesses which seemed to occur during the hot summer months. ³

Apparently John Martin was the first permanent settler on the north slope of the mountain. In 1814 he purchased eighty acres which included the east half of the southwest quarter of section 28 in township 3, range 1 east. Within this area, a health colony was established by 1827. It included a row of small log cottages and an inn where families from Huntsville came to escape the heat during the long summer months and to recuperate from illness. ⁴

The Reverend James Rowe, a Methodist minister at the Huntsville station, decided to build a school near this colony in 1829. By February of 1830 all the necessary buildings had been constructed, and classes began at the Monte Sano Female Seminary under the direction of the minister's wife Malinda. Four years later, this successful school was closed due to

the death of Mrs. Rowe at the early age of thirty-four. ⁵

In 1833, the town of Viduta was platted which included the school and earlier settlements that had been formed on the north slope of the mountain above Cold Spring. This undertaking was sponsored by Dr. Thomas Fearn and his brothers, George and Robert. They were assisted by Dr. Alexander Erskine, John Brahan and Bartley M. Lowe. The town was laid off in sixty-seven lots of one acre each. The streets ran north and south and east and west in such a way that the lots, divided by alleys in the back, faced on them. Within a short time thirty-eight lots had been sold to some of Huntsville's most prominent citizens including Samuel Chapman, Dr. Samuel Breck, Preston Yeatman, John M. Taylor, Dr. David Moore, Dr. Thomas Fearn, George P. Beirne, Arthur F. Hopkins, Bartley M. Lowe, Robert Fearn, Thomas G. Percy, Dr. Alexander Erskine, and John T. Smith. ⁶

Throughout the ante-bellum period Huntsville families who could afford summer homes on Monte Sano Mountain lived there during the summer months. In 1859, the Monte Sano Turnpike Company constructed a toll road to the mountain to provide better transportation for this summer resort. ⁷

During the Civil War only a few families lived on Monte Sano, and the Union troops visited the area occasionally in search of food supplies. In 1862 a coal mine was opened by Jonathon Broad, an Englishman, who contracted with Baker and Conway to deliver coal to their marble works for distribution to local residents of Huntsville. After the Union troops established a camp at the foot

O'Shaughnessy's brother, J. F. O'Shaughnessy; Milton Humes, a Huntsville attorney; William P. Newman, local real estate and insurance agent; and Dr. George M. Harris, local cotton manufacturer and hardware merchant.⁹

These men had a vision of transforming Huntsville into the "Queen City of the South" by developing the city as an industrial center and Monte Sano Mountain as a health resort and vacationer's paradise. They purchased more of the acreage on top of the mountain and built a two hundred room hotel on the west side which overlooked the town of Huntsville. This structure was designed in the Queen Anne style of architecture with broad porches surrounding it. It was heated by steam and lighted by gas. A grand ballroom could accommodate large groups for

formal as well as informal occasions, and a band played nightly from June 1 to October 31.¹⁰

The grounds around the hotel were beautified with beds of natural flowers and shrubbery, trees and promenade walks were developed. Fourteen miles of drives around the mountain were made to provide scenic views which, according to the hotel's advertisements, "pleased the eye and let the soul of man rejoice." Adjacent to the hotel was a livery stable containing trained horses, buggies and carriages which were made available to guests for riding or driving. Billiards, croquet, lawn tennis and other amusements were available. Trails connecting all springs and the bottomless well were maintained for hiking.¹¹

M. J. O'Shaughnessy bought

The O'Shaughnessy house, located on the eastern side of the mountain near O'Shaughnessy Point, burned in March 1890.





The toll gate keeper's cottage on the Monte Sano Turnpike, photographed circa 1890. The toll gate can be seen at the left.

and remodeled the Robert Fearn home on O'Shaughnessy Point overlooking the east side of the mountain. A number of new homes were built along the west and north side of the mountain near the old town of Viduta.¹²

A railroad built by the Huntsville Belt Line and Monte Sano Railroad Company and known as the "dummy line" was constructed to carry guests from the railroad station to the mountain. It was not too successful since travelers were afraid of the railroad bed's steep slopes.¹³

For a period of ten years the Monte Sano Hotel flourished, but the depression years of the 1890's took their toll on tourism, and the hotel was forced to close shortly after 1900. It was then purchased by Mrs. Laura Garth as a summer home for her family.¹⁴

The next period of develop-

ment on Monte Sano came in 1926 when a group of local businessmen bought 2200 acres of mountain property for \$42,000 and began to promote the sale of summer homes on the mountain. They also envisioned the building of a new brick hotel with grounds to include a golf course and swimming pool. Leadership for this project was furnished by D. C. Monroe, Herbert Johnson, Morton M. Hutchens, Sam S. Thompson, J. E. Pierce, W. P. Dilworth, I. A. Burdette, E. A. Terry, Raymond Jones and Ira M. Terry. This dream dissolved with the depression of 1929. In order to keep from losing their investment, they borrowed \$24,000 from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and gave a mortgage on the property for this amount.¹⁵

This was the status of the land titles on most of Monte Sano Mountain in 1935, when a drive began to develop it as a

state park. J. B. Mitchell, county agent for Madison County, working with the Chamber of Commerce contacted Sam F. Brewster, regional planner and designer of parks and recreation areas for the T.V.A., to ask his advice concerning the Monte Sano site as a park. Brewster thought that the location was ideal, but pointed out that an adequate water supply should be developed to take care of increased use which would naturally follow.

of park construction. It was Brewster's belief that two Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps could be placed on the mountain to do the actual construction of the park. ¹⁶

At this point in the development of the project, the County Commission was urged to purchase the property in order that it could be developed by the T.V.A. and maintained by the state.



One of the Civilian Conservation Corps camps erected on Monte Sano.

When the owners of the Monte Sano Construction Company were contacted by the Chamber of Commerce committee, they learned that 1,992 acres could be purchased for \$18,000. The remaining 400 acres could be used by the company to secure the \$24,000 mortgage held by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Col. Page S. Bunker, Alabama Commissioner of Forests and Parks, and Sam Brewster of T.V.A. conferred on the matter

With some reluctance the County Commission finally agreed to furnish the \$18,000 if the developers would allow two camps to be built on their land rent free. The city then came forward to provide additional water to the camp site by extending the McClung Street pipe to the top of the mountain and taking over the water system from the Monte Sano Construction Company. ¹⁷

On August 16, 1935, the first ninety-eight C.C.C. boys arrived from Knoxville, Tennessee, under the direction of Lieutenant C. B. Burgoyne. A day later they were joined by one hundred more, thus bringing the total to about two hundred men who were ready to go to work. Two camps, numbers twelve and thirteen, were constructed on Monte Sano to serve the needs of five hundred C.C.C. recruits.¹⁸

struction Company in 1927, was widened and blacktopped, thus giving two entrance routes to the park.¹⁹

To celebrate the official opening of Monte Sano State Park, dedication ceremonies were held on August 25, 1938. The program for this occasion began with a parade in downtown Huntsville followed by a motorcade which proceeded from the Courthouse to the amphitheater near the public lodge



This photograph of Monte Sano Boulevard was probably taken on July 4, 1927, when the road was officially dedicated and opened.

Within three years Monte Sano Park was completed. A road, now known as Bankhead Parkway, was constructed by W.P.A. workers to connect Pratt Avenue with the entrance to the park. The old road from the parkway to the old town of Viduta was improved and named Fearn Street. Monte Sano Boulevard, which had been constructed across the top of the mountain by the Monte Sano Con-

struction Company in 1927, was widened and blacktopped, thus giving two entrance routes to the park.¹⁹

At two-thirty p.m. the official dedication took place with Robert K. Bell serving as master of ceremonies. The Honorable William H. Bankhead gave the principal address after which a barbecue dinner was served in the picnic area. At seven p.m. a pageant depicting the history of Huntsville from 1805 to 1938 was presented. Authored by Weston Britt and

directed by Nancy Pierce, the cast consisted of local citizens whose forebears were among those who contributed to the development of the community.²⁰

Once again Huntsville residents became interested in building summer homes on the mountain. Although a water supply had been provided by the city in 1935, it still was inadequate to serve the needs of any increase in population.

Not until after World War II did the full development of Monte Sano as a year round residential area take place. Although Huntsville experienced some growth during the war as a result of the establishment of Redstone and Huntsville Arsenals adjacent to the city limits, the population on Monte Sano remained static. In 1944, the Monte Sano Hotel building was torn down and sold for the valuable timber it contained.

After gas rationing was discontinued and transportation facilities returned to normal, the Mountain Heights Construction Company became active in promoting the sale of lots on the mountain. A number of the German families who came to Huntsville from Fort Bliss, Texas, to work in the missile research field chose to build homes on Panorama Drive. Between 1945 and 1956 numerous lots were sold and construction of homes proceeded more rapidly than the water supply could accommodate. Shortly after Monte Sano became a part of the City of Huntsville in 1956, municipal services were extended to residents living on the mountain. In 1957, a large 150,000 gallon reservoir was constructed on top of the mountain, and water pressure was increased by the installation

of a pumping station. In 1957 a fire department was constructed, and an elementary school was built in 1959. As yet no full scale sewage system has been developed for the mountain, nor has a natural gas line been extended to that area of the city.²¹

The Monte Sano Civic Association was organized in 1954 to promote activities which would insure the development of a well-rounded type of community life on the mountain. This group has remained active in most civic affairs, particularly those related to slope development.²²

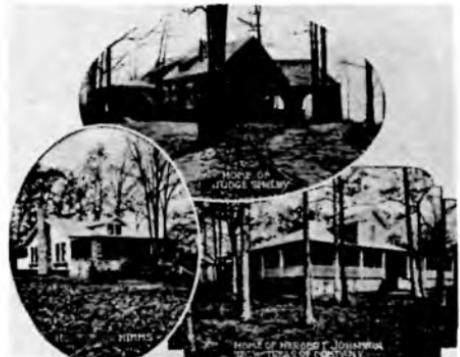
By 1978, only a few lots remained vacant on top of Monte Sano. On the eastern part of the mountain, Monte Sano State Park continues to provide recreation for several hundred thousand people who come to enjoy the beauty of the scenery and the fresh cool air. There are 1,436 residents on the mountain that are housed in 498 homes, apartments, and trailers. Eighty-seven percent of the 484 homes are owned by those who live permanently on the mountain.²³ Although there are still a few places where visitors can gain a beautiful view of the valley, many of the scenic spots such as Inspiration Point have now become part of the yards of home owners who have built along the edge of the mountain.

The dream of the development of Monte Sano as a health resort has been realized, not as the pioneers envisioned it but as a healthy residential community where family life can be enjoyed and where visitors are always welcome to enjoy the recreational facilities of a state park.

Footnotes

- 1 *Official Program of Monte Sano State Park Celebration*, Huntsville, Alabama, August 25, 1938.
- 2 "Historic Romance of Monte Sano," by Pat Jones, *Huntsville Times*, March 25, April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, May 6, 13, 1934.
- 3 *Ibid.* Miss Katie Steele, granddaughter of Dr. Thomas Fearn, related this story to me on April 25, 1935, while on a visit to Huntsville.
- 4 "Historic Romance." Miss Fannie Cabaniss who was interviewed by the author of this article told me this same story on a number of different occasions.
- 5 "Historic Romance," *Huntsville Times*, April 8, 1934.
- 6 Government Tract Book, p.154; Plat Book I, pp.22, 23; Deed Book B, p.190; Direct Index to Property A-Z, 1810-1919, Madison County Probate Record Office, Madison County Courthouse, Huntsville, Alabama.
- 7 "Historic Romance," *Huntsville Times*; *Williams' Huntsville Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror*, vol.1 - 1859-60. Huntsville, Ala.: Coltart and Son, No. 10 Commercial Row, 1859. (Reprinted by Strode Publishers, 1972)
- 8 "Historic Romance," *Huntsville Times*, May 6, 1934.
- 9 *Huntsville Alabama, Queen City of the South: Industrial, Mechanical, Agricultural, Mineral Resources, ETC.* Issued by North Alabama Improvement Company and printed by Caldwell Printing Company, Birmingham, Alabama, 1888.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*

- 12 "Historic Romance," *Huntsville Times*, May 13, 1934.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Live Life Longer on Monte Sano, Mountain of Health*, Huntsville, Alabama, issued by Monte Sano Construction Company, compiled and published by D. C. Monroe Printing Co., Huntsville, Alabama, 1927.
- 16 *Huntsville Times* (Monte Sano Edition), August 21, 1938.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Official Program, Monte Sano State Park Celebration*, Huntsville, Alabama, August 25, 1938.
- 21 Information obtained from Water Department, Fire Department and the City Board of Education office, Huntsville, Alabama, July 6, 1980.
- 22 *Monte Sano, Mountain of Health*, prepared and distributed by Monte Sano Civic Association (no date).
- 23 Statistics furnished by Community Development office of the City of Huntsville, Alabama, June 13, 1980.



Typical homes on Monte Sano, 1927

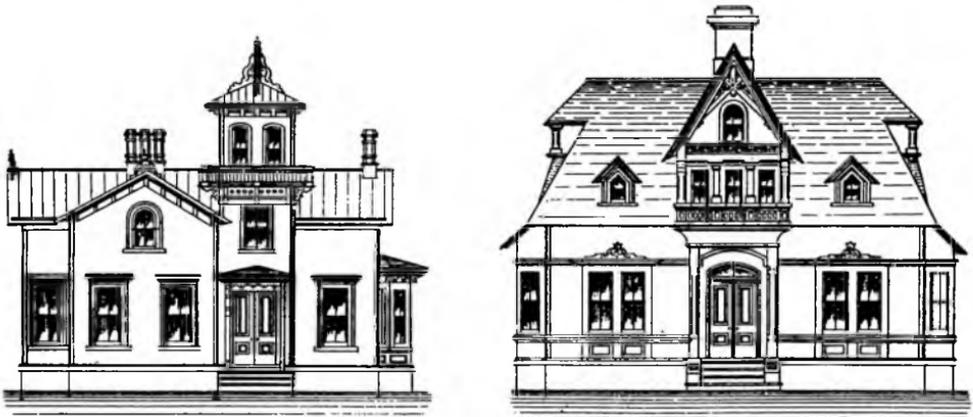
Relics

Old houses haunt me more passionately
than ghosts: perpetual fascinations of magnolia-
Greek Revival, Stick Victorian, Queen Anne: even
castellated visions of monolithic Rhode Island Stone Ends.

Victorian gingerbread, more serpentine than any
cottage curlicue out of Hansel and Gretel
appears appetite-teasing as an edible treat:

grit-crumbly like Easter Egg sugar
and sand-rough to the touch (those
19th-century imaginations, seaming their fanciful, quasi-
astral sublimate embroideries
are nakedly cabinetted here: we may sicken
on sugar, provided we hide the evidence...)
Then, insinuated

inside by ingenuity, I fondle surreptitiously
the friendly finger-patina of old banisters:
burrow like a brown recluse into closets,
inspecting the premises for webs: pad
about, ready to pounce, on wide pine boards
suspecting dim corners of overlooked mice. Ancient water-
stained paper, peeling in decadent strips
from stalactite-moist walls
exudes a musty declarative invitation: and
through the leaded glass of doorpanes at Christmas
millions of caged electric vespers glitter quietly on hall-erected
trees, wavering by the ambulant enthusiast in ripples,
caught like so many water-drowned stars. I languish



and devour the real-estate ads in the paper
like a termite, searching for the pithy square of print
which will be as a Message for me: but the prices
are too high and the insufficient, minted alloy-coins
in my fraying pocket
slither through the decaying threads like flat round eels
inadvertently set free. Therefore

my dreams feature huge white columns and obtrusive pediments.
Lecturers chatter endlessly in my slumber,
gabbing of friezes and plaster medallions.

I am forced to hunt my quarry in museums,
avid to flush out endless duplications
of the Corinthian capitals which once supported
Grandma's front porch. I go on every house tour
in every accessible city

and on the Neanderthal street every glazed eye of
every old house I pass leers, winks or whispers
lewdly "Come in...

Come in."

by Susan Luther



News...

MAYOR JOE DAVIS announced on July 1 that the city has been awarded an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant of \$1.7 million to be used for construction of the Huntsville Depot Museum and Constitution Hall Park. This is a 60-40 matching grant; EDA will provide \$1,749,251 and the city will match it with \$1,166,168 for a total project cost of \$2,915,419. The city's 40% matching funds will be provided mostly by in-kind services, so that little or no money for these projects will come from the general fund. It is expected that approximately \$500,000 of the total \$2.9 will be used on Constitution Hall Park with the remainder of the funds going to Depot Museum construction.

HUNTSVILLE DEPOT MUSEUM: The contract for the interior restoration of the passenger depot has been signed and the work is already underway; this phase of construction is being financed with funds awarded by the Appalachian Regional Council (ARC). The money from the EDA grant will be used for further development of the museum complex, such as work on the express and baggage buildings, roundhouse and turntable, and other site development. In addition to these structures, the total complex will eventually include a water tank, walks, bridges, drives, a pond, livery stable, small worker's cottage of the 1850s, car shops and dining car for serving

snacks. Neither the ARC nor the EDA grant provides financing for staff or exhibits.

The Huntsville Depot Museum board has hired the California firm of Duell Associates to prepare a site layout plan for the total museum complex. This firm has already submitted two preliminary designs for site development with the final plan to be completed later this summer. Duell Associates specializes in designing theme parks (such as Opryland) and, based on their past experience, will advise on the mechanics of establishing a successful public facility, as well as preparing a master plan to follow in future construction. It is hoped that the Depot Museum will open in two to three years.

CONSTITUTION HALL PARK: A portion of the recently approved \$1.7 million grant from the U. S. Economic Development Administration will be used on Constitution Hall Park. Funds will be used to finish the interiors of all the buildings that are now simply shelled in and to build five additional buildings. These additional buildings will include the Neal house, service wing, carriage house, outhouse, and sheriff's office. There are as yet no provisions for furnishings or staff. According to Harvie Jones, architect for the project, it will be approximately two years before completion of this final phase. A board has recently been appointed to plan

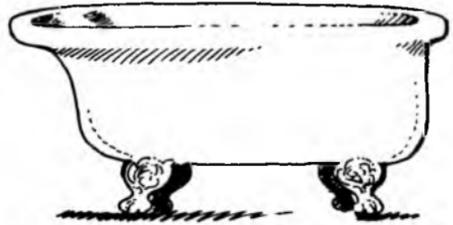
for furnishing, staffing, and overseeing the operation of the Park. Board members are Charles A. Caldwell, Sarah Fisk, Philip Gentry, Devie Mosley, Frances Roberts, John E. Tyson and John G. Zierdt.

HUNDLEY HOUSE: A contract was let some time ago for re-roofing the Hundley House with shingles identical to the original metal shingles. When the new shingles finally arrived from the manufacturer, they required hand trimming. It is hoped that work on the new roof will begin very soon.

The City Council has had several appraisals made of the Hundley House and authorized the advertisement for proposals to purchase the property. Only two proposals were submitted, both below the appraised value. The mayor has submitted the two proposals to the City Council to be acted on at a future work session. According to Ralph Gipson, assistant to the mayor, the mayor's position would be not to sell the property at this time.

OAK PLACE: If a claw footed bathtub is your heart's desire, now is your opportunity to possess one. The East Huntsville Baptist Church is selling a claw and ball footed porcelain tub dating from ca. 1920. It will go to the highest bidder; sealed bids will be accepted until September 1, 1980, and the purchaser will be announced by September 5. The proceeds will be added to the church's building fund for the restoration of Oak Place, the George Steele home. The tub is in good condition, has teardrop porcelain handles marked "H" and "C", and has been painted on the outside. Persons wish-

ing to see the tub prior to bidding may do so weekdays between 8:30 and 11:30 a.m. at the church. Bids can be mailed to: Bathtub, East Huntsville Baptist Church, 808 Maysville Road, Huntsville 35801.



If you do not need a bathtub but would like to contribute to the restoration of Oak Place, you can donate your used papers and cans to the paper drive being sponsored by the East Huntsville Baptist Church. The congregation is collecting newspapers, magazines, and catalogues (separately packed in grocery bags), and aluminum cans to raise additional money for the building fund. Papers and cans should be delivered to the church on the first Sunday of each month but can be left at the church on weekdays between 8:30 and 11:30 a.m., if necessary. This is your chance to help the church get cash for your trash and to support preservation.

The restoration of Oak Place is well underway with the exterior work being completed this summer. The stuccoed brick walls have been cleaned and sealed and are being primed prior to being painted beige. The window trim will be a chocolate brown. Repairs to the cornice and pilaster capitals have also been made. Harvilee Harbarger will be in charge of the landscaping. Interior restoration should begin in the

fall. Much of the electrical work has been completed, and a new heating and air conditioning system will be installed before work resumes on structural repairs.

early fall. A security alarm system is being installed, and many furnishings have already been purchased.

•••••

WEEDEN HOUSE: Interior restoration of the downstairs of the Weeden House has virtually been completed. The Twickenham Preservation Society, Peter Barber, president, is working out a lease arrangement with the Housing Authority and plans to open the downstairs as a house museum by late summer or

THE WAREHOUSE of architectural components operated by the Historic Huntsville Foundation has received several nice donations this summer. One large group donated by Mr. and Mrs. George Harsh contained several highly ornate box locks, five windows complete with glass, weights and interior and exterior trim, and two doors.

DONATE SCRAP GOLD

TO

HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION, INC.

- CHAIN PIECES AND BROKEN LINKS
- DAMAGED RING MOUNTINGS
- DISCARDED DENTAL GOLD
- UNMATCHED EARRINGS
- UNUSED CLASS RINGS AND PINS, ETC.
- UNMARKED GOLD PIECES ACCEPTED

TAKE TO

J. B. HILL AND SON JEWELERS
Heart of Huntsville Mall
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

DEPOSITORY FOR THE FOUNDATION

A RECEIPT WITH ESTIMATE OF CASH VALUE OF SCRAP GOLD GIVEN. ALL DONATIONS TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

ENTIRE PROCEEDS FROM SALE OF GOLD TO REFINERY WILL BE ADDED TO THE

HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION, INC.

REVOLVING FUND

PUT A PART OF YOUR HERITAGE INTO HUNTSVILLE'S HERITAGE

LET YOUR DISCARDED TREASURES PRESERVE HUNTSVILLE'S TREASURES

Mr. and Mrs. Mark Smith have donated a huge Victorian fret-work grill, such as was commonly used in hallways or to separate the parlor from the hall. Constructed of wood--probably oak--it measures 14'6" by 2'. The Foundation is most grateful for the generous contribution of these items which will eventually be reused in the restoration of Huntsville homes. If you would like to donate an old house part or need a replacement part for your old house, contact Ralph Allen at 539-0764.

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE Foundation is pleased to recognize and welcome the following patrons and benefactor who have recently joined the organization:

PATRONS

Dr. and Mrs. Silas W. Grant
Madelyn Hereford
Mrs. R. J. Lowe
Mr. and Mrs. Royce E. Mitchell
Mr. and Mrs. Carl H. Morrison

BENEFACTOR

Mrs. George R. Grumbles

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS of the Historic Huntsville Foundation elected new officers for the 1980-81 year as follows: Sarah Warren, chairman; (Mister) Royce Mitchell, vice chairman; Brenda Courtney, secretary; and Ira Jones, treasurer.

PLAN TO ATTEND the Covered Dish Dinner for HHF members on Sunday, August 17, at 5 p.m. in Ridley Hall, Church of the Nativity. After the meal, Jib McLain will present the slide program on Huntsville's architectural history that was prepared by Foundation members. This half-hour program will be made available to third grade teachers for use as an enrichment material in the teaching of Huntsville history.

CORRECTION: In the Spring 1980 QUARTERLY under Business Memberships, the name of McAlister & McQuinn Construction Co., Inc. was reported incorrectly. We are happy to set the record straight.

HUNTSVILLE-1880/ *continued*

From these newspapers, one gains the impression of a town forced to repair its existing structures because there was no money for new construction, and consequently, was unable to attract architects or hold builders. Transportation was poor and not until the end of the decade would a second railroad lay tracks into town. Industry was scarce and unable to support the community, which primarily was forced to rely on the cotton crop. A change in Huntsville's fortunes was not to come until 1884 when

local businessmen established a successful cotton spinning mill near the depot. This was shortly followed by the arrival of several northern entrepreneurs, who recognized in Huntsville an untapped resource ready for development. These men brought with them the money, connections, and ability to begin rebuilding the town as a cotton textile center, so that by 1890, Huntsville began emerging from years of inactivity and could look forward with confidence to a second period of growth and prosperity.

Reviews...

With increasing awareness of the necessity to preserve our built environment, preservation organizations have begun to proliferate. Each group concentrates on a particular aspect of America's architectural past, so that there is now an organization focusing on the special interests of nearly everyone concerned with preservation. Listed below are a selection of state and national organizations with a brief description of their activities and the benefits of membership.

THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION is the oldest and largest preservation group. It is the only national, nonprofit, private organization chartered by Congress to encourage public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings and objects significant in American history and culture. Its services are carried out at national headquarters, regional offices and museums in consultation with advisors in each state. Membership privileges include a subscription to both the Trust magazine and the newspaper, free admission to Trust properties, attendance at the annual meeting, a ten percent discount on books and items in the Trust shops, and a wide range of tours, meetings, and regional activities. The Trust magazine HISTORIC PRESERVATION is published bimonthly and features a wide array of articles and columns on preservation topics both here and abroad. The monthly newspaper PRESERVATION NEWS carries the latest in preservation news and activities as well as reviews of new books in the field. The Trust bookshop in Washington carries an excellent inventory of architectural books which can be ordered (at a 10% discount) by persons who do not have access to a good bookstore in their community.

The Trust also provides consultation on a variety of renovation, legal and educational matters through regional offices; the Southern Field Office is headed by Dwight Young in Charleston, South Carolina. National headquarters are located at 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, D. C. 20036, and annual membership dues are \$15 for an individual and \$20 for a family.

THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA is a national, nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection, understanding and enjoyment of our 19th century heritage. Members receive the quarterly magazine NINETENTH CENTURY which is devoted to cultural and social history from 1790 to 1917 with feature articles on architecture, fine and decorative arts, lifestyles and photography; members also receive the monthly BULLETIN which covers news on upcoming exhibitions, preservation activities, and chapter reports. Local chapters are chartered across the country with active programs of their own, although none currently exists in Alabama. The Society also offers a variety of tours, an annual meeting, an Autumn Symposium, and two, three-week summer courses--one in Boston on 19th

century America and one in England on the 19th century architecture, arts and history of that country. The Society is currently sponsoring a traveling workshop, "Upstairs and Downstairs in the Victorian House," which assists owners in restoring and recreating Victorian buildings. Membership in the Victorian Society is \$25 a year; to join, contact the Society at East Washington Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106.

THE LIVE-IN-A-LANDMARK COUNCIL is a state organization created and funded by the Alabama legislature in 1973 to aid and encourage the restoration of older domestic landmarks and the revival of older neighborhoods. Applicants to the Council must own a home eligible for either the National Register of Historic Places or the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage, and restoration of the house must be complete, in process, or planned. The board of directors is made up of couples appointed by the governor. Members of the Council receive a directory listing craftsmen and sources of hard-to-find restoration materials, financial advice, newsletters, a bronze plaque identifying their home as a registered Alabama landmark, and restoration aid.

Membership meetings are held several times each year at historic spots over the state to bring together historic homeowners with mutual interests, and seminars are presented periodically to relate the latest in authentic restoration methods and benefits. Membership is free to qualified applicants, who may contact the executive secretary of the Council at the Alabama Historical Commission, 725 Monroe Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36130.

THE HISTORIC HOUSE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA was established in 1978 to assist private owners of historic houses to cope with those problems peculiar to historic properties. In its first full year of operation the Association sponsored a number of conferences and workshops, worked actively with Congress and with federal agencies on laws, regulations and tax issues, published and reprinted a variety of materials, including HISTORIC HOUSES, and provided information and assistance to owners of historic properties. A regular part of the Association's program is an intensive, week-long preservation course presented in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution on "How to Preserve Your Historic House." Other programs co-sponsored by the Association include "Planning for the Future of Large Estates and Mansions" and "Managing Wear and Tear in Historic House Museums." The bimonthly newsletter HISTORIC HOUSES keeps members up-to-date on the latest issues affecting them as owners of old and historic properties, including new tax and legislation matters, grant and loan information, new publications and feature stories on old house restorations. The Association also publishes a series of special reports on energy conservation in the old house, inheritance taxes and their relationship to historic properties, and a guide to preservation literature, and actively encourages legislation favorable to preservation. The first annual meeting was held at Biltmore in Asheville and the second in Princeton. Membership in the Association is \$25 annually. The Historic House Association of America is located at 1600 H Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20006.

THE SOCIETY FOR COMMERCIAL ARCHEOLOGY is a unique national organization concerned with the artifacts and structures, signs and symbols of the American commercial process. Encompassing both the celebrated and anonymous work of many of America's best designers, the mass-produced forms of the machine age, and the vernacular conceptions of local builders, these elements comprise a significant part of our national heritage. Features of the American commercial environment include highways, airports and bus stations; gas stations, diners and motels; movie theaters, drugstores and department stores; and resorts, fairgrounds and amusement parks. The Society is concerned that these resources, while rapidly disappearing, are often considered too recent to be analyzed, recorded and preserved. The goals of the Society are to promote public awareness and exchange of information and to encourage the selective conservation of the commercial landscape. Members have the opportunity to participate in conferences and field trips, receive the SCA NEWS JOURNAL and special publications, and contribute to the future growth of the Society. The \$15 membership fee should be sent to P. O. Box 8248, Boston, Massachusetts 02114.

FRIENDS OF CAST IRON ARCHITECTURE is an organization dedicated to the identification, appreciation and preservation of cast iron architecture and street furnishings of 19th century America. These include not only the famous iron-front buildings but also fountains, statues (such as Vulcan), cemetery monuments, fences, decorative ironwork on verandahs,

streetlamps, and benches and garden furniture. Members are informed when demolition threatens an important structure and are kept current of cast iron restoration successes through informal newsletters; reprints of articles on cast iron artifacts are circulated. Members are encouraged to share news and slides of cast iron structures in their communities. Lectures on cast iron landmarks and tours of cast iron neighborhoods are presented each year in New York city. Persons interested in supporting the activities of this group should send their \$3 membership fee to Room 6C, 235 East 87th Street, New York, New York 10028.

THE ALABAMA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION was founded in 1979 to provide volunteer support to encourage and promote heritage projects in all fields including archeology, genealogy, records management, and historic preservation. The Trust distributes material on restoration matters upon request and is involved as an advocate on heritage matters before the Alabama legislature. (Additional information on the Alabama Trust appears in the Winter 1980 QUARTERLY.) Annual dues are \$10 for an individual and \$20 for a family and may be sent to P. O. Box 85, Decatur, Alabama 35602.



PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

Dr. Frances C. Roberts: page 5

*Huntsville Public Library: cover,
and pages 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11*

And Old Views

An examination of local newspapers published in 1880 reveals a small Alabama town struggling to recover from Reconstruction and the depression of the 1870s. Huntsville's antebellum prosperity and lifestyle had been swept away, and although fifteen years had elapsed since the end of the Civil War, the void created by their passing had still not been filled. Huntsvillians recognized the necessity of securing a new economic base for the town but were unable to attract the requisite capital to do so. In the meantime, they busied themselves with outrageous attacks on their political opponents during this election year and with the eternal frivolities that form a large part of daily life.

Three of the newspapers operating in Huntsville in 1880 were the *Weekly Advocate*, the *Weekly Democrat* and the *Weekly Independent*, and in reading them, one finds a varied collection of data and opinion reflecting life in Huntsville at the start of a new decade. As the year began, the *Democrat* urged its readers to stick to their recently made New Year's resolutions, but observed that some of those more easily broken for young ladies would be not to "chew gum, use cheap rouge, borrow a novel...hardly ever flirt, powder [her] nose, hint for supper after the opera, whisper in church, envy any girl's bonnet...lay [her] oiled head on his shoulder...swoon just to be caught, sneeze at the table, [and] sleep in [her] stockings." (January 7) The population of the town was

4,977; for the fiscal year beginning March 1, 1880, the city collected \$22,840.92 while its expenditures totaled \$22,785.40, leaving a balance of \$55.52. A barber collected 10¢ for a shave and 25¢ for a haircut; at the same time, tuition at the Huntsville Female College on Randolph Street ranged from \$10 to \$30 for a twenty week term. The town health officer warned against a fresh invasion of malarial diseases due to poor sanitation. During the year a debating society was organized, and the Sells Brothers "Millionaire Confederation of Stupendous Railroad Shows" performed in November. One of the odder incidents occurred at Oak Place, the George Steele home on Maysville Road (now the East Huntsville Baptist Church) A quart size bottle containing arsenic was found in the well, thus contaminating the drinking water. Charges against a couple living near the farm were filed, but the case was dismissed due to insufficient evidence.

Elections played a prominent role in 1880 when city, state and national offices were at stake, and the newspapers quickly took their stands. While the *Independent* remained out of the ensuing controversy, the editors of the *Advocate*, Austin H. Britten, and the *Democrat*, J. Withers Clay, geared up their long-standing feud, both lashing out at the opposition party, its candidates, and often at each other. The first skirmish arose over the election of mayor and aldermen in early April. The mayoral race saw the closest contest on record with Zebulon P. Davis receiving 434 votes to 432 for

Huntsville - 1880

by Patricia Ryan

Thomas W. White and one for S. J. Mayhew. Six aldermen were re-elected, and in addition for the first time, two black candidates were chosen. When the latter were nominated, Clay had remarked, "there is some sinister object in this movement, a Radical cat in the meal tub and we trust that no Democrat is rat enough to be caught by such a device" (March 24); the other two newspapers later chided him into admitting that there had been no party nominations and both were independent tickets.

This fracas had barely subsided when party platforms and presidential nominations were announced. The *Advocate* devoted more and more space to its support of the National Greenback Labor Party and its candidate, James B. Weaver, while its tirades against the opposition Bourbons, as the Democrats were called, grew increasingly bitter. To spread its Greenback philosophy, Britten announced that an extra edition of 10,000 copies would be circulated gratuitously throughout the state in mid-July. The *Independent* quietly supported the Democratic candidate, Winfield Scott Hancock, while the party standard-bearer, the *Democrat*, did so vehemently. The *Advocate's* virulent attacks in one edition prompted Clay to accuse Britten of "reckless and persistent defamation of public and private citizens." He continued, "We can expect nothing better from a hireling press, which to serve the vile purpose of its masters, is ready to 'distort the truth, cumulate the lie, and pile the pyramid of calumny'....Scarcely an issue of [the *Advocate*] has appeared, in which it has not manifested its vemon by throwing its paperwads, saturated with filth and falsehood, at prominent citizens." (August 4) Britten

retorted with, "A Bourbon is an antiquated political jack-ass, braying at the ghosts of dead issues." (October 27) Despite all the bickering, Democrat Rufus Cobb carried Madison County in the gubernatorial race, Greenback W. M. Lowe won the Congressional race, and Republican James Garfield triumphed in the presidential race, although none of the three newspapers had endorsed the latter. All three men won their overall races as well.

A continuing economic slump slowed business activity during the year. Early in 1880 it was announced that the citizens of Huntsville proposed to print a twenty-five to thirty page booklet describing the lands, minerals, water power, manufacturing facilities, markets, climate and social advantages in order to induce immigration and capital to the area. Transportation facilities were inadequate, and the townspeople formed various groups to raise funds to construct or improve the roads to surrounding cities. The Tennessee River Improvement Committee met in Huntsville in January to petition Congress for larger appropriations for the Muscle Shoals Canal, but the bill was defeated in the House of Representatives. Talk of a new railroad line surfaced several times but none was established, leaving the citizens with only an east-west line, the Memphis & Charleston; connections for north-south travel had to be made in Decatur. While Britten advocated that "Huntsville must not stand still. Progress is the word" (February 18), the editor of the *Independent* lamented, "A rabbit was chased around the Public Square Wednesday morning and ran into Mr. J. B. Laughlin's undertaker's shop. This is interpreted to mean that Huntsville will be a dead

place in nine months if we don't get another railroad." (February 26)

Cotton prices ranged from around 8 1/2 to 10¢ per pound early in the year and averaged about 12¢ in December. The season must have been a successful one as the *Independent* noted that more than one thousand bales were shipped from the depot in three days; however, the following week it stated that due to a premature winter not half the crop had been gathered. (December 2 and 9)

On a less happy note, in April notice was served on the First Presbyterian Church that unless the balance of their mortgage was paid, the church would be sold; the trustees voted to assess each member with his or her share of the debt and thus averted foreclosure.

Tight money had its usual effect on the housing industry. Real estate sales were sluggish, and the *Advocate* stated in September that there were not a half dozen vacant houses in the city. Alterations and repairs to existing structures proved less expensive than new construction, and during the year the Baptist, Episcopal and Cumberland Presbyterian churches were refurbished. Dr. M. C. Baldrige purchased the Jeremiah Clemens house at 219 West Clinton Street and was said to be "thoroughly renovating and repairing the house." (*Advocate*, February 18) The extent of this alteration is unknown for it was not until 1884 that the second story was added to the house, and presumedly, it then took on its Italianate features. J. Henry Landman added another story to his residence and enlarged it with a cottage style front. A house facing Franklin Street on the Constitution Hall

Park lot was to be enlarged and converted for the storage of cotton; again it is not known if this was done, since in 1882 the old buildings were razed and new ones constructed.

New construction was equally slack. It was announced in February that James M. Moss had purchased for \$550 one and a third acres, a portion of the site of the present Municipal Building, on which he proposed to build a residence, mill and grain elevator, the latter to meet a long felt need in the city. On West Clinton, two residences were erected, and Henry McGee constructed an ice house on his hotel lot (site of the Terry-Hutchens building) for his new ice machine, which would turn out 24,000 pounds daily. On the same street a new store was built. The local firm of John G. Baker & Company put up the mausoleum over the grave of Dr. Burritt in Maple Hill Cemetery. The desire for a hotel on Monte Sano was discussed, and Henry McGee announced an interest in erecting one, but it was 1886 when another group, the North Alabama Improvement Company, began the work. Throughout the year William Myers advertised as a builder, contractor and dealer in sash, doors, blinds and dressed lumber. The newspapers reported he had received the contract for the repairs to the Episcopal Church; but, it is not known how much or what other business he had. In December the *Democrat* announced Myers had sold his real estate and planned to move to Jacksonville, Florida, but at least by 1888, he had returned to Huntsville. One other builder to advertise was James M. Hutchens; no architectural listings appeared.

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from the Chairman

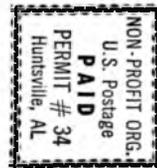
It is with a heavy sense of responsibility that I assume the chairmanship of Historic Huntsville Foundation. Following in the footsteps of Lynwood Smith, Nancy Van Valkenburgh and Lynn Jones will be no small task. I also am very excited in that we have come so far since our founding in 1974, yet there is so much left to be done.

Our members are enthusiastic and are always watching for new projects and programs which will promote the Foundation and thereby aid us in our local preservation efforts. The most recent example of this is the "Gold for Preservation" project which was brought to us by Catherine Gilliam. Hill Jewelers in Heart of Huntsville Mall will accept tax deductible gifts of scrap gold, which will be sold for refining. The proceeds will then go into our revolving fund. We thank Jimmy Hill for his participation in this project.

We are open to such suggestions from our membership at any time. Please feel free to call a board member or drop us a note when you have ideas or suggestions for anything you would like to see the Foundation do. As you travel about, keep your eyes and ears open for activities in other communities which may be helpful to us and let us know about them.

Remember that this is your city and your heritage, and your help is needed in its preservation.

Sarah W. Warren



from

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