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News...

Historic Huntsville Foundation

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News...



THE DALLAS MILL WAS ACCEPTED to the National Register of Historic Places on September 18, 1978. This is the first industrial structure in Madison county to receive national recognition for its historical and architectural significance.

Construction on the Dallas Mill began in April of 1891 on fifty acres of land in the East Huntsville Addition just north of the city limits along the tracks of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Operation of the mill began in November, 1892, and by 1894 it was running 25,000 spindles and 704 looms. Because the mill was located outside the city and drew many of its operatives from the countryside, housing and public buildings had to be provided for them by the company. An entire village complete with school, churches, stores, and recreation facilities grew up around the mill.

Dallas Manufacturing Company was extremely important to Huntsville as it was the first large weaving mill to locate here in the lean years following the Civil War. Its construction on the edge of town provided the town with a financial base which had been lacking since the war. As one contractor predicted, "it settles

a doubt as to Huntsville's future (and) gives a renewed confidence." Other textile firms quickly followed the example set by Dallas, and soon Huntsville was surrounded by cotton mills and their accompanying villages. The influx of people and money resulted in a building boom for Huntsville during the early 20th century that only came to a halt in 1930 when the effects of the depression reached here.

Dallas was shut down during much of the 1930's as a result of the depression and of labor union activity. In 1944 Dallas began selling the mill cottages to employees and finally sold the mill property itself in 1949. The Dallas Manufacturing Company was dissolved in 1952.

The Dallas mill building is a fine example of 19th century brick mill architecture with its repetitive rows of large arched windows to provide light and ventilation, its distinctive towers which rise above the roofline, and the enormous smokestacks - those ubiquitous symbols of 19th century industrial prosperity.

Dallas Mill is located on the south side of Oakwood Avenue just east of the railroad tracks.

THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION has awarded the Historic Huntsville Foundation a Summer Intern for 1979. The Foundation's proposal was one of 35 selected for funding from across the country. A college student majoring in preservation, architectural history, or architecture will spend twelve weeks in Huntsville this summer creating renderings for the facade restoration of selected commercial buildings in the downtown. The completed designs will be presented to the building owners who will be under no obligation. It is hoped, however, that they then might be convinced to restore their buildings.

The intern also will compile an audiovisual production combining all of his proposals into a program that can be presented by the Foundation to various civic groups to create public support for a revitalized downtown.

The intern will be selected by the Foundation in February from a list of student applicants submitted by the Trust.

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ALABAMA AD VALOREM TAXATION UPDATE: If you own property that is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is now eligible for the 10% assessment ratio regardless of its use. To qualify for the change to Class III, you must present to the tax assessor the letter from the Alabama Historical Commission informing you that the property has been added to the National Register. This should be done between October 1 and December 31, 1979.

If you own property located in either Twickenham or Old Town Historic Districts that is

NOT used as a single family, owner-occupied residence and you wish to take advantage of the reduced ad valorem assessment rate for historic properties, you must have the property CERTIFIED before October 1, 1979. This requires filing a certification application with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. If the property contributes to the historic significance of the district, the Secretary will notify you by letter to that effect. This letter must be presented at the tax assessor's office between October 1 and December 31, 1979, and it must be dated prior to October 1, 1979.

Owner-occupied, single family residences within the districts will automatically receive the 10% assessment ratio and need not be certified now. If you have questions about the certification procedure or wish to file a certification application, contact Linda Bayer at the Huntsville Planning Commission.

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THE GUDENRATH BUILDING AT 102-106 North Washington Street may have been demolished before you read this. The owner, Mr. Bobby Yarbrough, had already signed a demolition contract before HHH became aware that the building was in danger.

The structure has stood vacant for several years with the usual attendant deterioration. The owner naturally decided that it was cheaper to pay taxes on a vacant lot than on an old, empty building, hence the demolition contract. This is the sequence of developments that Huntsville cannot afford to have repeated if the downtown is to retain any of its historical identity for the future.

The Gudenrath building was erected in 1900 by Otto and Joseph Gudenrath who had hired the architect H. D. Breeding to design the structure. Breeding maintained an architect's office in both Huntsville and Chattanooga for several years around the turn of the century before eventually moving to Birmingham where he worked until his retirement about 1930.

The specifications called for a structure 75 feet front and 80 feet deep of two stor-

The Gudenrath family, who ran a wholesale grocery as well as the bakery, disappeared from Huntsville about 1930, perhaps as a result of the depression. In 1934 the Yarbroughs hired Huntsville architect Edgar L. Love to remodel the Gudenrath building, primarily to convert the second floor into a suite of doctor's offices.

A number of Huntsville merchants have leased space in the Gudenrath through the years, most recently the Twickenham Pharmacy. The American



ies. "The first floor will consist of three stores of 20 feet each, running back the full length of the building, and the second floor will be divided into many commodious offices. The Messrs. Gudenrath will operate a steam bakery in one of the stores." ¹ In 1908 the building contained a bakery and two grocers.

In 1918 the Gudenraths sold the property to William M. and G. Walter Yarbrough for \$18,000.

¹ MERCURY, March 14, 1900, page 5.

Red Cross and the Tennessee Valley Council of the Boy Scouts also maintained offices in it.

The Gudenrath is one of the finest commercial buildings of downtown Huntsville. Its two-story, red brick facade is divided into three bays by continuous raised piers that are terminated above the cornice by contrasting masonry caps. Each bay of the second floor features four, round-headed windows accented by masonry arches with keystones that

spring from brick impost. A contrasting ashlar sill runs unbroken across each bay. A corbel table separates the two floors and is repeated below the brick cornice which is capped by a thin ribbon of stone.

The structure is visually exciting, relying for its effect on a repetition of facade elements, contrasting materials and an imaginative use of brickwork. The increased height and slight variations in the center bay impart to the building a strong presence and balance.

Demolition of the interior of this landmark commercial building has already begun. However at this writing, the building could still be restored and put to a new, viable use. Its demolition would not only deprive the downtown of one of its better buildings, but also would be a serious loss to that block of Washington street by creating a gaping hole next to the Dunnivant's building. The Gudenrath building is eligible for the National Register and the tax benefits that ensue as a result of such listing.

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MR. WILLIAM C. ALLEN OF Jackson, Mississippi, will be the speaker for the second program of the HHF's 1978-79 series. Mr. Allen will present a slide lecture on "Historic Architecture and Preservation in Mississippi." His particular interest is the architecture of Natchez, and he has numerous slides of the mansions in this antebellum town. Mr. Allen is an architectural historian who received his master's degree from the University of Virginia. He worked for the state historic preservation office of

Mississippi until last October as Chief of the Restoration and Development Section. He is now a free-lance restorer and architectural historian residing in Jackson. The lecture will be Thursday evening, January 25, at 7:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Huntsville Public Library. It is open to the public.

AN EVENING OF FILMS will be the third program presented by HHF. Each film will focus on some aspect of restoration and preservation; they will be shown on Tuesday evening, February 20, at 8 p.m., in Parlor B of the Von Braun Civic Center. Open to the public.

THE FINAL PROGRAM will be a panel discussion on "Guidelines for Decorating, Furnishing and Landscaping a Historical Building for a Home or Business." Panel members will be Madelyn Hereford, Dr. and Mrs. John Hoar, and Harvilee Harbarger. This discussion will take place Tuesday evening, March 20, at 8 p.m., in Parlor B of the Von Braun Civic Center. Open to the public. *

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THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION is a non-profit organization established in 1974 to encourage the preservation of historically or architecturally significant sites and structures in Huntsville and Madison county and to increase public awareness of their value to the community. Membership is open to all persons interested in enhancing Huntsville's future by preserving its significant architectural heritage. To join, send a check with your name, address, and telephone number to Evelyn Riggs, Treasure, P.O. Box 786, Huntsville, Alabama, 35804. Student - \$2.50; Individual - \$10; Family - \$15; Business - \$50; Patron - \$25-99; Benefactor - \$100 and up.