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Summer

1979

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY

Of Local Architecture & Preservation



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Vol. V, No. 4

Summer, 1979

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HUNTSVILLE:

1866 - 1927

The BIG SPRING during a flood, possibly that of March, 1898



60 Years of History

from Newspaper Accounts

The following are excerpts from newspapers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that describe Huntsville as it struggled to come to grips with the new industrial society that emerged after the Civil War. Many of these accounts were written to attract immigration and industry to Huntsville and consequently were most extravagant in their praise of Huntsville. No factual errors have been corrected, but several articles have been extracted.

1866

Improvements in Huntsville this season have not been as extensive as we expected last winter they would be, and our expectations then were not very high. On Mr. T. Lumpkins' corner, three store rooms have been erected; Mr. Kaufman's store, on Eustis street is going up rapidly; Mr. Sprague's large warehouse and store, near the depot, is under headway; some few small houses may be erected, and these, with repairing, painting, &c, &c., are about the extent of the improvements in our place. The Court House has been entirely repainted, and the building much improved in looks inside. We cannot expect to see Huntsville improve very greatly, until our lands are again in cultivation. Our lost prosperity must be dug up again out of the ground.

Huntsville Advocate, July 21

1873

Hunting the hippopotamus on the banks of the Nile, and the alligator in the bayous of Louisiana, the lion in Numidia, the gorilla in Africa, and the royal tiger in Bengal, are all tame and inert pastimes compared to collecting money in Huntsville.

Huntsville Advocate, April 4

1873

No southern city has more wide spread fame than this. From one extreme of the country to the other it is spoken of as the most beautiful of southern cities, and yet but comparatively few know anything of the resources of the adjacent country, or of the sustaining power that has made the city what it is....

Time was when neither Alabama, nor any southern state desired miscellaneous immigration. That time is passed, however....

Now that the old regime has passed away forever, bringing with the change new duties, new responsibilities and new opportunities, it behooves the people to bestir themselves, and to see to it that correct representations go abroad for the common benefit.

Of the almost countless thousands of foreigners who monthly come to America, it is only a fractional per cent that find their way to the Cotton or Gulf states. The effect is still more appreciable. Throughout the Northwest cities are built almost in a day, railways advance in every direction, new commonwealths are formed, and an era of prosperity is engendered that increases each year. Contrast this condition of affairs with those that exist in Alabama today. With a climate and soil unsurpassed upon the broad face of the earth, with a productive area of great extent, with a ready market at home and abroad for every pound or bushel of surplus products, and yet how slow, comparatively, is its development.

Huntsville, the county seat of Madison County, is the largest city in North Alabama, having a population of at least 7,000....Huntsville is noted for its many elegant residences, and substantial public buildings. Take a stroll and drive upon whichever street one will there will be found palatial mansions and well kept grounds. In summer the air is laden with the fragrance of myriads of flowers in door yards, and the overhanging branches of shade trees upon each side of the street almost constitute an arbor, miles in extent.

The streets are for the most part platted regularly, crossing each other at right angles,

and all of them are of good width. They are graded and macadamized, well provided with drainage and substantial sidewalks, and as a consequence, in fair weather are thronged with handsome equipages or well dressed pedestrians.

Turnpikes, either macadamized or graveled, extend from the city in various directions, making the town accessible at all seasons of the year to our country friends, and in this matter, especially, we hope Madison County may still further extend itself. Good turnpikes will do more for the local trade of the city than another railway. The pikes now completed are: the Meridian toward Fayetteville, the Western, Whitesburg, Big Cove and Monte Sano.

Gas works have also been erected by a company, and the churches, most of the business houses and numerous private residences are consumers. The mains will be extended as occasion requires, and it is hoped additional street lamps will be ordered.

Huntsville Advocate, April 4

1881

Reminiscences of Huntsville, by Prof. Leroy J. Halsey.

The writer's first impressions of this beautiful little city date back to a period of between fifty and sixty years ago. As it stood out then to the admiring eyes of childhood, and on memory's map still stands, it had not much to boast of in the way of population, or on the score of either public or private improvements. But its site was fine, and its natural scenery charming. The snug little village quietly reposed against its background of wooded mountain on the east, and looked out to the north, west and south over a rich, undulating plateau of cultivated fields and prime-

val forests, broken only by isolated blue hills in the distance.

There was near the centre of the site a rocky, yet densely wooded, overhanging cliff from whose base gushed a spring of cool, crystal waters, with volume strong enough and deep enough to have passed in Greece for no mean river. Much of this wild beauty of rock and shrub, and rushing water has long since given way before the advances of art and industry, while the dense groves of oak and hickory, poplar and chestnut, with their undergrowth of vines and honeysuckle, which once embosomed the place as in a casket of green, have all disappeared.

Many a curious story was told in early times how unwelcome visitors, in the lack of more legal punishments, had been treated by moonlight to a rough descent over the bluff and a cooling bath in the waters, while horse and wagon found dangerous lodgment high up in the abutting ledges "till called for."

Prior to 1820, little had been done, or even thought of, in the way of public improvement. The town was rough and unattractive, except what nature had done for it. But the decade between 1820 and 1830 was an important one in its history. It was the transition period into a new and higher life. During this period its first churches were built, and some of the academies and seminaries which afterward gave it much celebrity. Its streets were beautifully graded and macadamized, and its water works established. Its two principal builders during this and the subsequent period were Thomas Brandon and George Steele, who filled the town with large, substantial and even elegant

mansions. Under the lead of Mr. Steele, who had travelled for the purpose and made himself a fine architect as well as builder, the town early laid aside its rough village garb, and assumed, both in its new public buildings and its elegant business houses and fine private residences, quite the aspect of a city. It was under Mr. Steele's practical influences, seconded by many citizens of public spirit and large means, that Huntsville caught that spirit of improvement and adornment which, in the end, gave it the reputation of being the most beautiful city of its class in all the South...

Huntsville Independent, March 17

1881

From a letter to the editor written by Mrs. W. of Atlanta.

I have a few words, as follows:

The lovely city of Huntsville with its population of 6,500 souls, all told, including the suburbs, has a prestige that few cities of its size can boast. The green hills and stately oaks that surround the town make a fitting frame for a people whose stateliness, quiet dignity and

unobtrusive manners suggest not merely the wealth of a by-gone day, but the refinement, the leisure, the elegance which is the outcome of a thoroughly and slowly ripened civilization, dating far back into the past.

To the stranger dropping down into Huntsville during the summer months, the city is likely to impress him as a "dull town;" but the people are rousing themselves to the importance of manufactories &c., and see ahead brighter days for Huntsville. The latest and greatest sensation at present is the new Cotton Factory, which they hope to get into successful operation by the latter part of '81. At a recent meeting, a Board of Directors was chosen, electing Dr. Harris, President, and Wm. R. Rison, Treasurer, both officers without compensation. \$25,400 was raised in a very short time, with the promise of whatever amount needed as the

THE HUNTSVILLE COTTON MILL was built on Jefferson street in 1881 and began operation the next year. It was the first mill in the city and produced yarns. In 1918 the name was changed to THE MARGARET MILL. Demolished.



enterprise advanced. Mr. Joshua Coons, a Providence, R. I., man, has been chosen superintendent of the new factory. Being a practical man in the mill business, the success of the enterprise is confidently hoped for.

At a called meeting of the city authorities, they agreed to exempt from corporation taxes the factory for a period of ten years, and it is supposed that they will have the water tax remitted too, it being the duty as well as the pleasure of the city to remove any obstacle that might retard the advancement of the enterprise.

A gentleman from Nashville, Tennessee, Mr. O'Shaughnessey, having leased or purchased the old railroad shops, will at the expense of about \$75,000 erect and have in successful operation by fall, mills for making oil of cotton seed, which will be sold and shipped to Europe; which, after reaching there, will undergo some purifying process and be returned to this country as table oil of the most superior quality - possibly olive oil.

Huntsville has two banks - National Bank of Huntsville, Jas. H. Mastin, president, and a private bank, Wm. R. Rison & Co. The National Bank is a very substantial building with heavy columns and thick walls - built in the good old times when people aimed for solidity and not for show. In those days people and characters were as solid as their houses; now everything goes for show, and very many of them could not bear investigation. The National Bank of Huntsville was erected as a branch bank at a cost of \$70,000 long years ago.

The city of Huntsville has a great many merchants who sit in shady places and strive to "keep

cool," and have a great deal of time to improve their minds during this warm weather and find the "missing link," until late in the afternoon, when the streets are filled with the beauty and fashion of the city: then trade begins to "look up" a little.

The leading school in Huntsville is the Huntsville Female College, under the especial auspices of the Methodist Church, President A. B. Jones, late of Jackson, Tennessee. The proficiency of the pupils in the various branches of study created quite a sensation during the late commencement.

The Presbyterian Female school is under charge of Mrs. Ross, a very good school.

A very creditable institution is the State Normal School, colored, Principal William H. Councill, who edits a Democratic paper, which is very popular among the Huntsville people. The Radicals hate him, as I can testify.

Huntsville is well supplied with newspapers, there being some five or six, the INDEPENDENT, DEMOCRAT, ADVOCATE, HERALD, etc.

A pleasant place to drop in for half an hour is the Photograph Gallery, there being only one in the city. It is full of the loveliest pictures finished in Mr. Collins's best style. Mr. Collins came here about eight years ago from Indiana and is well known in the city. He makes a specialty of copying in India ink. All his negatives are preserved and additional pictures can be had at reduced prices.

We will close, with the hope that the cotton factory, and the



oil mill as well as all others in Huntsville, may be a success.

Yours truly,
MRS. W.
Huntsville Independent, June 30

1887

As showing that the spirit of progress and new life are abroad in Huntsville, it will not be amiss to note the changes and buildings in course of construction.

Work on the street railway is going forward and will be pushed to an early completion. Fully a half mile of track has been laid, and this week will likely see a mile completed. As stated elsewhere this street railway will be extended to the new mammoth hotel on Monte Sano.

The work of remodeling, repairing and furnishing anew the Huntsville Hotel begins in a few days - just as soon as the architect completes the designs, at which he is now engaged.

Important improvements will also be made at once to the already handsome hotel of Mr. Henry McGee, adding new designs to its artistic appearance.

The HUNTSVILLE HOTEL was begun in 1857 on the site of the present Henderson Bank. In 1887-88 the original four-story block on the corner was remodeled, and the three-story annex to the north of it was added. On the far corner of the block was the Opera House. In November, 1910 the original building was destroyed by fire, and one year later the annex and Opera House burned.

While the city is well and amply lighted with gas, a company has just been organized with large capital and have applied to the city for right of way for the erection of posts in the city for Electric lights. A new bank is also being discussed, and its establishment is among the early probabilities. This enterprise is but an evidence of faith gentlemen of capital and fine business judgement have in Huntsville's future which grows brighter each day.

A number of new store and residence buildings are in course of erection, and contracts let for others to be completed this year.

On the vacant lot between the Huntsville Hotel and Opera House, Col. Jas. F. O'Shaughnessy will erect a block of three large, three story business houses, and will have solid glass fronts and constructed according to the latest and most approved designs in Architecture. They will be an ornament to any city in the land, and a fitting place for them will be in this city of rare charm and unequalled beauty.

see it and know it is all that is necessary to be convinced that what we have stated is true.

Land that sold thirty days since within two miles of our city for thirty and forty dollars per acre, today readily commands sixty dollars per acre, and in sixty days more will be sold for one hundred dollars per acre. This is not unnatural, for real estate eligibly

The McGEE HOTEL as it appears here was built in 1877, and the ironwork balcony was added two years later. Mr. McGee personally traveled to Cincinnati to select the iron cornices and window caps. On Christmas day, 1924, the hotel caught fire and was destroyed.



Mr. J. R. Stegall has just completed one of the largest, handsomest and most splendidly arranged Livery Stables in the south.

The growth of Huntsville is solid, based on a sure and certain growth that will be permanent, and is not the flashy outgrowth of a "boom" on paper and speculation. Its future is not only assured but no city of the South has brighter prospects and more encouraging evidences of realizing its every promise and hope than Huntsville. To

located within three and a half miles of as beautiful a city as Huntsville is, with a population of at least six thousand inhabitants, is intrinsically and really worth two hundred and fifty dollars per acre. We have our streets as well macadamized and as well lighted with gas as any city of its size North or South.

We have a moral, thrifty population, and no one doubts but that in a short time we will be directly connected with the Tennessee River by a rail-

road. Why then, with such surroundings, should we not step promptly to the front as the leading city of the great and fertile valley of the Tennessee. This we will do....The spirit of progress and improvement is with us and with us to stay. Mark this prediction.

Every one recognizes, who has investigated the facts and informed themselves of the situation of Huntsville that it has, all things considered, superior advantages to any point in the South for manufacturing purposes. Huntsville now has a cotton factory of ten thousand spindles, and the yarns made are equal to any in quality of any factory in the Union. This company has just recently doubled its capacity, which is the result of an increased demand for their goods. This factory has never been able to meet the demand, and will continue to increase its capacity until able to do so.

It is only a question of a short time when there will be factories here for making domestics and calicoes of all grades.

The Huntsville cotton seed oil mill, of which Major M. J. O'Shaughnessey is President, is one of the largest and most superior, in all of its details, in the country.

The most improved and latest machinery is used, and a very superior grade of oils are made which meet with a ready sale.

In fact the demand is so great for this company's goods that a double force of hands are worked - one during the day and the other during the night, thus keeping the mills in continuous operation all the time.

The saw and planing mill of Mayhew & Myers, though of recent

birth, has proved very successful and meets to a great extent, the large and increasing public demand for this character of goods.

Logs are brought here by rail and sawed up and dressed, and made into doors, window sash, weather boarding, shingles, &c, &c. They have the latest and most improved machinery, and do first class work.

McDevitt's planing mill is of a number of years standing and supplies a large and increasing demand for dressed lumber, door and window sashes, and its record for first class work is established.

Messrs. Bowling & Sugg have one of the most superior ice factories in the South. The unequaled water they get from the Big Spring, because of its great purity, enables them to make the finest quality of ice in the whole country. They not only supply the city of Huntsville, but ship their ice to all points along the M. & C. R. R. from Chattanooga to Memphis.

Mercury, March 2

1890

There is no point possessing so great a combination of advantages as HUNTSVILLE.

Railroad, telephone and telegraph facilities - Dummy line to Monte Sano of nine mile circuit - Electric and gas lights, an excellent system of water works, perfectly pure, from a cold spring flowing 1,250,000 gallons per hour, and located in the heart of the city. Two banks, two metropolitan hotels, and the mammoth summer hotel on Monte Sano, three miles distant; a large general market house, an elegant opera house, magnificent federal building, a large

ice factory, and a cotton factory of 10,000 spindles, of late improved machinery. This cotton factory only makes cotton yarns, that are of so superior a quality that one house in Philadelphia has engaged its entire product. It consumes about 2,000 bales of cotton per year, grown immediately in this neighborhood; and its fine fibre causes the yarn to be ranked with that of the most superior quality in this country. It has for several years paid a net dividend of over 20 per cent. We also have one of the largest cotton seed oil mills in the South. A cotton exchange that buys on the streets of Huntsville from farm teams, many thousand bales that are shipped by rail and water to Eastern markets. The county produces over 30,000 bales of cotton a year, that is the finest in the South. We have sash and door factories, planing mills, a saw mill, broom factory, carriage and buggy factory, grist mill, harness, boot and shoe shops, cigar factory, wagon factory, and many mammoth stores; churches of all kinds, public schools, private schools, college, seminary and normal institute. Two new railroads are building in, and we are THE RISING CITY of the South; which is the result of quiet, solid study of her advantages by a steady development. An inland city of mature and enlightened society, beautiful homes, drives and shade trees, and in a climate unequaled for health in the world.

One of the most wonderful springs in the world gushes out from the base of a cliff in the heart of the city of Huntsville. This spring is of soft water, cold and clear. It flows out in a stream about twenty-five feet wide and two feet deep and its capacity is estimated at 40,000,000 gallons every twenty-five hours. The spring, the

water works and the adjacent ground that is used as a public park, is the property of the city of Huntsville. By means of a turbine wheel and force pumps the water is forced into the mains, and reservoir, to supply the city with water. Nine miles of pipe from six to twelve inches are supplied with fifty-five hydraulic hydrants and insure the city with plenty of water and pressure for fire purposes.

The Monte Sano Railroad is eight miles and a half long, is of standard gauge, laid with steel rails, and ballasted with rock. The grade is about one hundred and thirty feet to the mile and with powerful locomotives, fine coaches and all modern improvements, the road may be said to be perfectly equipped, well managed, and a feat of engineering skill rarely equaled in the world. The general manager of this scheme from its inception is Arthur Owen Wilson, who gives it his entire personal management and in connection with J. F. O'Shaughnessey owns the road. The road connects with the Memphis and Charleston and the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis railways in Huntsville, and leaves for the mountain several times each day. There are several stations, and along the entire route, are continued scenes of far reaching views of the famous Tennessee valley, that are unexcelled in the entire world.

Perhaps as fine a home as a gentleman of culture and artistic taste could desire is the home of Major M. J. O'Shaughnessey in the suburbs of Huntsville. The floors, casements, stairways, mouldings, and wood finishings of the house are of native wood that the major has picked during the past eight years, and the sawings, dress-

ings and mouldings are of his own designs and under his personal supervision. In the forty rooms, each is furnished in exquisite taste, and the native hardwood Alabama timber of different grain and kind. It is impossible to enter into elaborate detail, but all of the modern improvements, with many original ideas of the proprietor unite in making it a unique, comfortable and magnificent home. In the basement are the breakfast rooms, pantry, kitchen boiler room, smoking room, etc.; solid oak and walnut doors, floors, ceilings, etc. On the first floor are parlors finished in ebony and gold, and also with white and gold; another room is a symphony in brown. The ceiling decorations of hand painting, the stained glass of special shades and harmony, all unite in the arrangements to add pleasure to all the senses. The upper floor is conveniently arranged in bed rooms, billiard

rooms and observatories.

Major O'Shaughnessey is a gentleman of culture and an artist. He has gathered some rare gems of ancient pottery and bric-a-brac. Around through the house are rare Japanese screens, placques of enamel and gold, immense Chinese bowls, Hungarian vases, rare rugs, candelabra, an incense burner of the Fifteenth century, and all that a refined taste could revel in abounds throughout the house. The massiveness of the house resembles an ancient castle, and from its windows at any point is presented a pleasing landscape view. The major has a pack of English greyhounds, and as foxes and deer are in the neighboring mountains, it is grand sport over brush and briar, heath and cope in the wake of the hounds.

The O'SHAUGHNESSEY HOUSE, 1886-87, now McCormick House Antiques, 2005 Kildare Street.



Last Tuesday the editor accepted the invitation of Mr. W. F. Heikes, the general manager of the Huntsville Wholesale Nursery company, and spent the day in examining this model and profitably conducted enterprise. After a ride of some ten miles we arrived at the premises consisting of 1,000 acres.

Mr. Heikes has been raised in the business, as was his father and grandfather before him; and under his able management is developed the largest fruit tree nursery in the world. Everything moves along with clock-work precision, and is calculated to the minimum of expense.

No trees are retailed, but are shipped to the wholesale distributing agencies, which are located at Dallas, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Rochester and Philadelphia, where they are sold to nursery men.

Science in cost of living has been demonstrated by the manager Mr. Heikes. Houses that, in the North, would cost \$500 are here erected at a cost of \$40 to \$50.

To a man of family, twenty-five cents a week is rented a one room house, and for a two roomer, fifty cents a week is charged. About thirty of these are scattered throughout the premises at convenient distances. A large boarding house is neatly conducted by a good cook and an experienced steward.

Their food is all kinds of meat in bulk as much as they want, coffee three times a day, biscuit and cornbread, all kinds of vegetables, with some fruits. The entire cost of this, as mostly raised on the place, is 5½ cents a meal; and the hands are so charged.

Lodging in good clean beds

is also charged for at 5½ cents a night, making a total cost of \$1.58 a week.

The average pay roll is \$600 a week and the hands are paid every Saturday night; boys, girls, women and men from three to five dollars a week.

The store is opened every Wednesday and Saturday night. Here they can purchase at cash prices almost anything they want. The goods being purchased in bulk by the company for cash, they give their hands the benefit of the cheapest obtainable goods. It is of course optionable with the hand to purchase.



Since 1882 Huntsville has been in the foremost rank in her public school system. Her public graded schools are modeled after the best and most advanced systems of the North and Northwest. The system comprises ten grades, beginning with the kindergarten and ending with a fairly high school course. A teacher is supplied for every forty pupils, and a competent superintendent gives to the schools his constant and careful supervision. For able and faithful instruction, and effectual management, these schools are abreast of the most

advanced institutions of their kind.

The Huntsville free schools are supported mainly by the city government, and the city council are fully determined to keep the schools in such a condition that they will command the respect and moral support of the community, as well as to meet the demands of a rapidly growing population.

McGee's hotel is prominently and centrally situated at the corner of Jefferson and Clinton streets, having a frontage on Jefferson of about 200 feet. The building is a large and im-



MONTE SANO HOTEL, 1886-87; razed.

posing brick structure three stories in height, solidly built and evidencing in its architecture and internal arrangement all of the best and most advanced ideas of what is required in a modern hotel.

On the lower floor are situated the offices, reading rooms, sample rooms, and dining hall. There are also five large store rooms, four of which are occupied by prominent business houses, and the fifth by the Southern Express company. At the corner is located a series

of rooms containing the cigar stand, bar-room, and billiard and pool room; in the rear of these is the barber shop and bath room. All of these apartments are nicely decorated and complete in detail.

Huntsville is a town of about eight thousand inhabitants and the capital of a large and fertile cotton region. One of the interesting sights to the Northern visitor is the public square, which is the centre of trade and commerce. Here may be found numerous "Tennessee" wagons from the country, loaded with cotton bales, wood and all kinds of produce.

Good board may be had at from \$3 to \$4 a week. Carpenters, masons, and all kinds of skilled laborers are in demand all over North Alabama. Good farm lands may be had at from \$5 to \$12 an acre. Horses and mules at from \$50 to \$80.

The people of Huntsville are courteous and hospitable to visitors in the good old-fashioned Southern way. And as for the new Huntsville hotel, it is a thoroughly first-class house in the Northern sense of the word.

The rooms are large and handsomely furnished, many of the sets costing as much as six hundred dollars. Each room has a large closet and a luxurious bath-room, with hot and cold water and porcelain bath-tubs. There is an elevator in the hotel, and the numerous parlors, the card rooms, the ladies' pool-room, and the reading rooms are furnished with every luxury and convenience. It is certainly surprising to come upon such a thoroughly equipped house in this out-of-the-way region.

On the crest of the mountain the North Alabama Improvement company have purchased and

skillfully laid out into drives, promenades and parks a large area of beautiful, undulating, well-shaded plateau, on which, near the western brow of the mountain, a large, modern and beautiful Queen Anne hotel has been erected. It contains 200 rooms, wide halls, broad encircling galleries, is lighted by gas, heated by steam, supplied with bath, billiard and bowling alley apartments, has a conspicuous and commanding observatory, and is so constructed that there are no inside or back rooms, all having gallery fronts and ample openings for the admission of light, free circulation of the bracing mountain air, and each commanding superb views. The hotel is elegantly furnished, kept in first-class style, and in all the appointments is a model of convenience, comfort and luxury, and a most inviting and delightful resort for Northern people during winter, Southern people during summer, and invalids especially.

We present to our readers herewith a view of the new government building just completed. The building is three stories with a basement, and capped by a mansard roof of copper and slate which cost \$8,000. The basement will be used for files of the United States land office. In the south end of the first floor the corner rooms will be used by the clerk of the court; but on three sides around the main room, used for the postoffice, is a nine foot corridor. The postoffice will have 830 yale and town lock boxes costing \$1,652. In the northwest corner of the first floor three rooms will be used by the register and receiver of the United States land office, and one room will be used by the post master. The second floor is much the same as the first; a wide corridor sur-

rounding the court room, which is 48 x 50 with high ceiling. The south end rooms will be occupied by the United States marshall and witness rooms, and the north end rooms will be used by the judge, United States attorney and clerk. The third floor will be used at present for jury rooms, and such other needs as the future may require. Water and gas are conveniently placed through the entire building, while washstands, closets, and heating by furnace in the basement, are conveniencies that future occupants will duly appreciate. The walls and ceiling are finished in plaster of paris, and the entire wood work of the structure is cypress wood, oiled and varnished; while the floors of blue and white diamond blocks, add to the look of durability which everywhere prevails. The outside is cased with Nashville pressed brick, and the building presents a handsome, imposing appearance.

Huntsville Independent, April 25

1890

We can now secure the building of a million dollar cotton mill, which by reason of the liberal donation of the land made by the North Alabama Improvement Company and the magnificent donation of water by the city must be worth, the day the fires are kindled under the great battery of boilers and the hand engine set in motion, at least twelve hundred thousand dollars to its stock holders and of incalculable benefit to our citizens. This mill will be the largest and most modern in all of its appointments in the entire south and will make a line of fabrics heretofore not manufactured in the south.. .The mill will employ about 2,000 hands, and we can readily see if the usual ratio is maintained will increase the population of Huntsville 35 to 45

hundred people.

Montgomery has recently given a bonus of 100 and 25 thousand dollars for a plant of similar magnitude, while we are only asked to take stock in the company and are given every reason to believe it will readily pay an annual dividend of 10 to 20 per cent. The construction alone of the buildings for the mill proper, and the erection of 6 to 8 hundred tenant houses for the operators will bring to our city an army of workmen... The hum of 50,000 spindles and the clatter of 1,500 looms attended by the great throng of men, women, and children necessary to operate this gigantic collection of machinery will inspire the prospector and investor with confidence in the growth of Huntsville.

Mercury, June 4

*U. S. COURTHOUSE AND POST OFFICE,
built 1888-90 on Greene between Eus-
tis and Randolph, demolished 1954.*

1927

With \$4,500,000 in building permits issued during the last 12 months, and more than six million dollars in new buildings and projects announced for the next 12 months, Huntsville is second only to Birmingham in the state in building activity and is probably the fastest growing city of its size in the entire South.

With a population of 26,400 within a radius of three miles, it is the largest city in North Alabama, and its commercial enterprises are large and varied. Surrounded by a large and fertile agricultural, cotton, fruit and stock raising country, it is recognized the most important commercial center of the Tennessee Valley and the leading cotton manufacturing city in the state, and one of the leading manufacturing cities in the South. But with it all, it is a city of culture and is with-



out a peer in educational facilities.

And while its citizens extended welcome arms several years ago to a number of cotton manufacturing plants, they were pleased when the concerns preferred to build their mills on the outskirts of the city.

Within its corporate limits Huntsville could boast of but a little more than 9,000 people, while within three blocks of the limits there were enough people to give the city the fourth largest population in the state.

The city abounds in textile mills, having a total of nine within a radius of three miles. One of these, the Lincoln Mills of Alabama, now operating two large plants, has announced an extensive program involving the expenditure of \$5,000,000. This provides for construction of two other plants and 500 homes for employees. The new mills will afford employment for 1,500 additional operators. Other mills of the city are Merrimack Manufacturing Company, Dallas Manufacturing Company, Lowe Manufacturing Company, West Huntsville Mills, West Huntsville Knitting Mills and Margaret Mills.

Other industries of the city include iron foundries, hardwood factories, fiber and veneer works, cotton oil, brooms, brick kilns, creameries, nurseries, water cress, letterheads and others. The city has 65 manufacturing plants in the Huntsville district, employing 10,000 people.

The skyline of the city is rapidly growing. The Tennessee Valley Bank building is the latest structure of skyscraper type. It is a seven-story

building, costing a quarter of a million dollars. The Huntsville Daily Times, Huntsville's largest paper and only daily, has already begun work on a 10-story building, which, when completed, will cost nearly \$500,000. Equipment for the plant will cost \$100,000, and will include the most modern type of machinery.

At present, practically every leading street in the city has been paved or resurfaced, and at the last meeting of the City Council it was decided to continue the program as long as there remained a single unpaved thoroughfare of importance.

With the growth of the town came the need of better school facilities. Another bond issue was proposed for building a new high school building, and it also carried by a record vote. The building, which will cost approximately a quarter of a million dollars, is now under way and is expected to be completed for the Fall term.

The hospital began to show the signs of old age and inferior equipment, and a movement was started for a new building. A \$200,000 hospital, modernly equipped and up-to-date in every manner, was the result. It is considered the finest hospital in the Tennessee Valley and will rival the best in Birmingham and other large cities.

The city is noted for its beautiful homes. Colonial in style, they are built and surrounded by luxurious lawns. It is a characteristic of the residential section that the homes be free from crowded tendency of the modern age. There are many estates of value, and many imposing homes that give such romantic color to the South.

The Birmingham News, May 22 ■

News...

THE FOUNDATION HELD ITS ANNUAL election following the Membership Tea in May. The officers and board members for this year are

<i>Chairman</i>	Lynn Jones
<i>Vice Chairman</i>	Freeda Darnell
<i>Secretary</i>	Charlotte Wallace
<i>Treasurer</i>	George Wallace
<i>Editor</i>	Linda Bayer

BOARD MEMBERS 1979-82

Mavis Daniell	Shelbie King
Freeda Darnell	Royce Mitchell
Lynn Hereford	Virginia Morley
Ira Jones	Frances Rice
Leroy Simms	

1978-81

Ralph Allen	Brenda Courtney
Margaret Cole	Catherine Gilliam
Lynda Doud	Evelyn Riggs
Trice Hinds	Sophye Lowe Young
Lynwood Smith	Nancy Van Valkenburg

1977-80

George Wallace	Helen Middleton
Sara Warren	Billie Grosser
Lynn Jones	Charlotte Wallace
James Record	

♦♦♦♦

THE CENTRAL CITY ASSOCIATION OF Huntsville and the HHF sponsored the Summertime Tours for Kids again this year. The purpose of the tours is to help children in grades 2-5 discover that buildings can be an exciting

visual record of our city's history. Several early churches, many historic homes, some downtown commercial buildings, and the reconstructed Constitution Hall Park were included in the tours which ended at the Duck Pond in Big Spring Park. Light refreshments, donated by J. C. and Juanice Scrimshire, were served there by volunteers from the Senior Center.

Junior League members served as tour guides. Those participating this year were Virginia Morley, Robbie Burlison, Mary Coral Murphree, Suzanne Thomason, Margaret Pate, Peggy Hoagland, Libby Fitzpatrick, Barbara Williams, and Suzanne Matthews.

Eleanor Harsh and Mavis Daniell of the Foundation provided orientation materials for the guides and set up the tour route. The tours were offered three mornings a week from June 5 through July 27. Our thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of this project.

♦♦♦♦

THE REVENUE ACT OF 1978 provides a new tax incentive for the rehabilitation of older commercial structures. Simply stated, it allows an owner to deduct 10% of his qualified rehabilitation expenses directly from the taxes he owes.

To qualify for this 10% investment tax credit, the fol-

lowing provisions must be met:

1. The building must have been in use for 20 years, and 75% of the existing external walls must remain in place after the rehabilitation.

2. The building must be used for industrial or commercial purposes. Apartment houses do not qualify.

3. The tax credit applies to expenses made after October 31, 1978, but acquisition costs can not be included.

4. If the tax credit is to be used for a certified historic structure, the taxpayer must have the rehabilitation certified by the Department of the Interior.

5. The investment tax credit cannot be used with the historic preservation amortization provision; however, it can be used with the historic preservation accelerated depreciation provision. (See Tax Reform Act of 1976)

6. An investment tax credit can be used by certain lessees as long as the owner of the property consents to the use of the tax credit by the lessee.

Individuals should consult legal counsel for assistance in determining the tax consequences for their particular case.

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APRIL EBERLY, THE FOUNDATION'S summer intern, arrived in Huntsville June 24 to begin her 12-week project. April was born in Hawaii and later lived briefly in New Zealand and Australia before moving to Virginia. There her parents bought an 18th century Georgian stone house in Loudoun county which they partially restored. In 1971 April's family moved to the Eastern Shore of Maryland where they purchased another Georgian house dating from the late 17th or early 18th centuries. This house was in need

of a total restoration, and April received some practical experience last summer working on it. The house is named Sudler's Conclusion, after an early owner, and is a National Register property.

April attended the University of Maryland and graduated in May with a Bachelor of Architecture degree. During her five year course of study, she took courses in preservation architecture and architectural history. As part of the program, she also traveled to Mexico for ten days to study Mayan architecture.

April is working in the offices of the Huntsville Planning Commission this summer and living on Randolph street. ■



REVIEWS.../ *continued*

A partial list of topics covered by the book includes reproducing complex moldings, adding a wall switch for an overhead light, repairing staircases, correcting problems on interior doors, recreating a wainscot, repairing plaster, fixing squeaky floors, and reconstructing porch balustrades.

In addition to explaining specific repair procedures, each section discusses any building code restrictions that might be applicable. Although these may be different for Huntsville, they remind the homeowner that he should check the local code before starting his project. REHAB RIGHT would be an invaluable aid to anyone undertaking the rehabilitation of an older house. ■

Reviews...

THE CAPE MAY HANDBOOK by Carolyn Pitts, Michael Fish, Hugh J. McCauley and Trina Vaux. *The Athenaeum of Philadelphia* (219 South Sixth Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106), 1977. 78 pages, illustrated, glossary, bibliography, paper, \$5.

REHAB RIGHT How to Rehabilitate Your Oakland House Without Sacrificing Architectural Assets. *City of Oakland Planning Department* (1421 Washington Street, Oakland, California 94612), 1978. 140 pages, illustrated, paper, \$5.25.

Within the past few years a number of manuals have appeared that guide the homeowner in rehabilitating the older house. These are often published by city planning commissions and contain material pertinent to local conditions and houses. Two of the best are those published by Cape May, New Jersey, and Oakland, California. Although they are not intended for national distribution, much of the information they contain is applicable anywhere.

THE CAPE MAY HANDBOOK is a general introduction to the field of residential preservation while Oakland's REHAB RIGHT is a nuts and bolts guide detailing how to cope with the myriad problems encountered in domestic rehabilitation.

THE CAPE MAY HANDBOOK begins with a survey of architectural styles popular from the 1830s through the 1930s as exhibited by extant houses in Cape May. Both photographs and exquisite line drawings are used to illustrate the written descriptions of each style. Cape May was a seaside resort community that enjoyed an international reputation as a spa during the second half of the 19th century. It competed with Newport, Rhode Island, and Saratoga Springs, New York, but was eventually

eclipsed by Atlantic City in the early days of the 20th century.

Cape May has a tradition of frame construction often of extravagant design featuring extensive porches and decorative trim. Over 600 houses, hotels and commercial structures survive today to make it one of the largest collections of 19th century vernacular frame buildings in the United States. In 1976 the entire city was declared a National Historic Landmark District.

Because of its resort character and wooden tradition, Cape May's houses share only a superficial resemblance to those in Huntsville of the same period. Nevertheless, the text is of a general nature making its contents of use even to local residents concerned with preservation and restoration. Essentially the HANDBOOK presents guidelines outlining how to plan for a restoration or rehabilitation project. It is not a do-it-yourself guide but a checklist of maintenance or restoration problems, symptoms, and possible solutions.

A short section explains how to get the restoration started, including when and how to locate architects and contractors, and

details to consider when signing work contracts.

The importance of maintaining an attractive and appropriate streetscape is stressed in an examination of sidewalk paving materials, fences and driveways. The text discusses which materials are suitable and the maintenance they require while illustrations contrast appropriate and unacceptable designs and treatments.

This is followed by a discussion of exterior building features, the problems associated with them, and approved solutions. Diagrams show the construction of foundations, framing members, and double-hung windows as well as a comparison of windows, doors and roofs typical of each stylistic period. A description of siding and roofing materials gives the relative life span of each and warns which should be avoided.

A chapter on tools for preservation briefly explains historic districts and commissions, tax incentives, easements, revolving funds, and other preservation mechanisms of both a public and private nature.

For those people considering the purchase of an old house, a checklist is reprinted from THE OLD HOUSE JOURNAL which aids the prospective buyer in evaluating the structural condition of a house and pinpointing those defects that could be most expensive to repair.

The appendix lists federal, state and local legislation and resources pertinent to preservation as well as a glossary and a bibliography. The HANDBOOK is an excellent introduction to the field of preservation and a fine reference volume. Its attractive format and

numerous illustrations make it a joy to read.

REHAB RIGHT, the Oakland book, was conceived as an easy-to-use guide to design decisions in the hope that the architectural integrity of Oakland's homes will no longer be unnecessarily lost.

The authors explain that to rehabilitate a house is to take corrective measures which will make the structure liveable again. Some aspects of rehab work entail renovation, the introduction of brand new elements; the other facet of rehabilitation is preservation, the retention of valuable existing elements.

The focus of REHAB RIGHT is the protection of the structural and decorative characteristics typical of each architectural style because they are the features that constitute the visual integrity and economic value of the building. Modern elements should only be introduced where absolutely necessary for legal or utilitarian purposes.

Chapter 3 offers suggestions to consider prior to beginning any work and is followed by two chapters, one on exterior, and the other on interior repairs. Over 100 problems commonly encountered in the rehab of a house are presented along with one or more solutions and an indication of the cost.

These chapters are generously illustrated with drawings that show construction details, how to repair damage, and examples of poor design solutions. For example, the section on front doors covers replacement of glass panels, patching damaged veneer, replacing a worn threshold, treatment of the hardware, and ways to increase security.

Continued on page 18

And Old Views

Education during the 19th century was largely a private concern conducted by private schools that were segregated by sex and often operated under the auspices of a church.

One of the most successful of these locally was the Huntsville Female College which operated from 1851 until 1895. Loosely connected with the Methodist Church, it was chartered by the state legislature on January 27, 1852, as the Bascom Female Institute, and among the first trustees were Pleasant B. Robinson, Robert S. Brandon, William H. Moore, Irvin Windham and Thomas S. McCalley.

The first session of the Bascom Institute was just concluding when the charter was awarded. Classes were being held in the old Masonic Hall under the direction of Mrs. Jane Childs who was a graduate of Athens College. A notice in the February, 1852, *ADVOCATE* stated that the second session of the Institute would commence February 2 in the Masonic Hall; "The young ladies of the Institute are permitted and required to attend any church in the town which may be selected by their parents and guardians." Board was available at Mrs. Childs (401 Lincoln) or in other private homes from \$50 to \$60 per session. A "thorough and finished education" was promised.

Once the charter was received, the trustees began planning for a permanent home for the Institute. A large tract of land extending from Randolph to Clinton and running 234 feet along each street was purchased from George Steele although the deed was not transferred to the Institute until 1855. Steele was also selected as the architect for the design of the school building and his plans were completed by November, 1852.

Daniel Turner, Thomas McCalley, William McCalley and William Moore contracted with the trustees of the Institute to "have constructed, the building for said Bascom Female Institute according to the plans prepared by George Steele, three stories high...and as said building is designed for a boarding as well as day school, (they) also bind themselves to furnish and erect suitable kitchens, smoke house, servants rooms, store rooms, bath rooms, and all other buildings, so as to have every necessary building and improvement to adapt the whole to a complete 'Day and Boarding School'." They also agreed "to procure suitable furniture, for said building, also books, globes, charts, maps, musical instruments, and a philosophical and chemical apparatus to be worth in all not less than \$2500 in addition to the amount necessary for the erection and final completion of said building.

"They also obligated themselves to enclose the lot...in a permanent and substantial manner, and at the same time to ornament and beautify the grounds." The school was designed to accommodate one hundred pupils.

The building was erected on the site now occupied by 415 through 421 Randolph and by 420 through 426 Clinton. The *ADVOCATE* (June, 1853) reported, "It is to be 106' long and 52' wide, three stories high with two fronts and colonnades on the fronts to each story and small portions to the ends."

The school building opened in the fall of 1854. It faced Randolph street and the main portion was two stories high on a full raised basement. Designed in the Greek Revival style, it featured a central, projecting portico of six, two-story Ionic columns raised on a foundation of brick piers. The pediment and low gabled roof rested on a simple entablature.

Plain pilasters accented the corners of the facade and connected the portico to the main wall.

The daylight basement was visually separated from the upper wall by a masonry string-course. The narrow windows were grouped in pairs with those on the first floor being tallest to stress the location of the main level. A smaller wing of two floors extended to the east and had a gable on each face.

In 1855 the name of the school was legally changed to the Huntsville Female College. The College operated until the Civil War when it closed to be used as a hospital. Classes were resumed following the war, but it was not until 1878 that money was available to repair it. The College's newspaper, *FIRST FRUITS*, commented in February, "How glad we are to see

The original Randolph street facade of the HUNTSVILLE FEMALE COLLEGE designed by George Steele and completed in 1854.





The HUNTSVILLE FEMALE COLLEGE as it appeared after the 1888 remodeling. The drawing is by H. D. Breeding, an architect who worked in Huntsville during the 1890s.

Randolph) and connected the house and the school with a covered walkway.

the steady improvement going on in repairing the College building and renovating the grounds. Very soon the desolation of war will be forgotten and our noble edifice will renew its pristine freshness and beauty."

The College catalogue of 1881 reported that the "rooms are large, well ventilated, suitably furnished, with a dressing room attached to each. The building is furnished with gas throughout, and water from the city waterworks, with a bath-room on each floor."

In 1880 Amos B. Jones was elected president of the College. The property had been in litigation for many years, and the case was finally resolved in 1888 when Jones purchased the building and grounds for \$15,000. Two years earlier he had bought the house adjoining the property on the west (413

By 1885 the College was flourishing and had over 160 pupils of which 64 were boarders. Jones planned to increase the enrollment, and once he owned the property, he embarked on a building campaign. In the summer of 1888, Jones began construction of an additional floor containing twenty more rooms and of a large reading room and library. The grounds were laid off with rustic seats, flower beds and shady arbors, and the whole was enclosed by a modern fence. The building was lit by 100 incandescent lights, and an elevator had been installed to handle luggage.

The additional story was achieved by removing the gabled roof and replacing it with a mansard. The mansard roof had become very popular during the 1860s in the East because it was the latest in fashion, having been imported from Paris, and because it allowed an extra

floor to be tucked under the roof without extending the wall. Light and ventilation were provided by the use of dormer windows placed in the bottom slope of the roof. The roof was covered with patterned tin, and the ridge was accented with delicate metal cresting. Other exterior changes introduced by Jones included placing wooden brackets under the eaves and corbeling the chimney tops.

Jones' improvement program continued on the interior; in 1893 a new chapel was completed. "The ceiling is of steel and the artist, T. Simpson, finished the work in excellent taste. This finished, it is one of the finest auditoriums in the South." New furniture, carpets, and musical instruments were also installed that year as well as additional electric lights, and the interior was repainted.

The following year Jones was contemplating the construction of additional buildings to accommodate the increasing enrollment. But his plans came to an abrupt end on the morning of January 8, 1895, when a fire broke out in the roof of the College building.

"In a very few minutes the engine was at the plug in front of the college building and two lines of hose were run up to the fourth story. A dense smoke was issuing from the roof and also filled the hallways and rooms, but no flames could be seen. Holes were then cut through the ceiling on the inside and through the mansard tin roofing on the outside and the entire sheeting under the roof was discovered to be a mass of flames. The firemen were handicapped in their work on account of the numerous small rooms, while they would be playing a stream in one room the flames would break through in

another twenty feet away.

"The wind was blowing a gale and at the first appearance of the flames through the roof, it was seen that the building could not be saved and willing hands went to work to save the furniture and trunks of the boarders.

"The flames continued their course of devastation until only the bleak walls and tall, lonesome chimneys stand today where yesterday stood the pride of Huntsville, the Alma Mater of her daughters and our mothers." (MERCURY, January 9, 1895)

While the ashes were still smoldering, Jones announced grand new plans to rebuild; instead, he purchased a hotel and a mountain near Gadsden where he opened the Jones College for Women. It failed after one year.

The insurance coverage on the Huntsville Female College was insufficient, and in 1897, Jones' Huntsville properties were sold. The president's house went for \$3500 and the vacant college lot brought \$4,000. The following year Columbus Nolen purchased the college lot, and at the turn of the century built four identical houses facing Clinton street. Nolen died in 1927 and willed one house to each of his four children. ■



PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

O'Shaughnessey House by Linda Bayer; all other photographs from the collection of the Huntsville Public Library.



from

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