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A Letter to the Editor

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A Letter to the Editor

Since we are the ones who purchased the "House on Banister," we particularly enjoyed your article in the Fall, 1979, issue of *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*. There is, however, a sequel to the story, and we thought we should pass it on to you.

Knowing that this was the only known surviving example of the simple frame house of the 1815 era, we too wanted to save it. We obtained a reputable mover to slip steel rails under it in order to lift it so that it could be placed on a foundation. This was necessary since the twelve inch cedar logs that the house was built on rested entirely on the ground. It was at this point that the house totally collapsed. It turned out that termites and rot had made powder of those large beams. We then had a decision to make. Since this was the last house of its kind and since we already had drawings made of it, we decided to reproduce as closely as we could the original three rooms. The late additions were not of interest.

The first step was to save all that could be incorporated into the reproduction. We saved all or part of the unbroken window panes, the old mortised beams, the doors, the bricks, the boards from the floors, the moldings around the roof, the baseboards, and the cherry stairway. When we started to work, we had to find windows of the same size with the same

small pane arrangement. We had to find clapboard siding that could be put on unevenly as it was on the old house. The shingles had to give the cedar shake look. Similar brick had to be found. The original front door was a double door so we put in double doors. We had the advantage of Harvie Jones' guidance and the fact that part of Constitution Hall Park was copied from the house on Banister, so we could show the brick mason how to lay the bricks, etc. We had to alter the stairway to conform to the building code. We found that Stone Lumber Company in Decatur could reproduce more molding and more flooring. We found old cut stone for front steps as was used in such houses. We saved some shutter hinges and were able to order some from Ball & Ball so we can hang workable shutters. The eaves and soffits were somewhat difficult to reproduce but have been well done. Since our builders Jerry Gillespie and Joe Eidson were interested in the reproduction, the work has been made easier.

We have a new addition to the three rooms, of course, which we believe was done in keeping with the old house. Harvie drew the plans. We hope that the above described efforts somewhat offset the loss of the original. In fact, we hope that when it is completed, that those who see it will think they are seeing the old house.

Kathleen and Lee James