

The Historic Huntsville Quarterly

Volume 6 | Number 3

Article 8

3-21-1980

News...

Historic Huntsville Foundation

Follow this and additional works at: <https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly>



Part of the [Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons](#), and the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Historic Huntsville Foundation (1980) "News..." *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*. Vol. 6: No. 3, Article 8.
Available at: <https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly/vol6/iss3/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Historic Huntsville Quarterly by an authorized editor of LOUIS.

News...

THE FIRST ANNUAL O'MORE Design Forum will be held on May 30 and 31 in Franklin, Tennessee. The Forum will present a series of lectures focusing on the local heritage of design during the Jacksonian era. The programs to be offered on Friday include Wendell Garrett, editor of ANTIQUES, speaking on "The 19th Century Design Heritage;" Roy Graham, resident architect of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, discussing "The Greek Revival;" a tour of Rattle and Snap; and "The Food and Tables of Our Ancestors" presented by Louise Belden of the Winterthur Museum.

Scheduled for Saturday are Marlin Phythyon, consultant to the Cottage Garden, talking on "Bouquets from the Past" and Jean Weeks of the Scalamandre Museum of Textiles explaining "Historic American Textiles." Admission to the Merry Month of May Table Setting Exhibition is part of the Forum.

Registration for the Design Forum is limited to 100 participants and must be made prior to May 10, 1980. The fee is \$90 and includes admission to all programs as well as several meals. A limited number of registration forms are available from Linda Bayer at 532-7353.



THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE Foundation is pleased to recognize the following individuals and businesses for their generous support of the Foundation's goals and activities and to welcome them as special members:

BUSINESS MEMBERSHIPS

Bragg Furniture Company
Bryson Construction Company
Decatur, Alabama
First Alabama Bank of Huntsville N. A.
Giles & Kendall, Inc.
W. L. Halsey Grocery Company
Hicklin Printing Company
The Huntsville Times
G. W. Jones and Sons
Jones and Herrin, Architects
McQuinn Construction Company
People National Bank
George Rutledge
Sears, Roebuck and Company

PATRONS

Mr. and Mrs. Dennis C. Brown
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Cobb
Mr. and Mrs. James Downey, III
Mr. and Mrs. Harvie Jones
Dr. and Mrs. Charles Morley
Mr. and Mrs. Charles T. Paludan
Col. and Mrs. Paul Schuppener
Ms. Laura Jo Wilbourn
Mrs. Christine Willice
Mrs. Margaret W. Rieder

BENEFACTOR

Frank and Stevenson Realty, Inc.



OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT may lose another house to demolition. The owner of 111 Steele Street has applied to the Huntsville Historic Preservation Commission for permission to demolish the structure. At a March 24 meeting, the Commission denied the demolition permit for ninety days to allow the owner and other interested parties time to find an alternative to demolition. At the end of this waiting period, the demolition permit must be granted if the owner still requests it. One possible solution would be to move the house, but this choice becomes acceptable only when demolition is the sole alternative.

The problem in this case is that the house has been allowed to deteriorate over a period of several years until it now can not meet the minimum housing codes. Unfortunately this is not an isolated problem but afflicts several Steele Street houses. If this becomes a trend (one house has already

disappeared), the northern end of Steele will soon be vacant land and eventually all new construction will take the place of the 19th century houses that once populated it. The Steele Street houses date from the late 19th century and are modest frame buildings representative of the vernacular Victorian cottage. They are of tremendous importance to Old Town in presenting a balanced picture of a late 19th century neighborhood and its architectural styles. Such neighborhoods commonly mixed economic classes in a rather casual way, which was probably one reason for their great vitality. Unfortunately these smaller, less decorative cottages are always the first to go, leaving the district with an uncharacteristic proportion of more expensive structures.

BUT--Old Town also has some good news. On March 27 the City Council approved a zoning change for part of the district

111 Steele Street



from 2-A to 1-B. The southern portion of the district was already zoned 1-B so that this change brings all of the district--with the exception of a strip along Lincoln Street--under the same zone. The effect of 1-B zoning is to prevent the new construction of duplexes and apartments in Old Town and to prevent the conversion of existing structures to two-family or apartment use if they are not already so functioning. The buildings that are currently operating as apartments and duplexes may continue to do so; however, if this non-conforming use ceases for a period of six months, the property must then conform to uses allowed by the existing zoning.

Old Town was originally developed and achieves its significance as a neighborhood of single family dwellings. To allow it to now develop with other than single family uses would be to defeat the purpose of designating it a historic district.

Old Town has demonstrated the value of historic districts in stabilizing and upgrading a neighborhood through private initiative and money. Since 1974 when the district was established, forty-six of 250 structures have improved in use. This includes twenty-four properties that have changed from rental to homeowner, nineteen that have been converted from apartments to single family, and three businesses that have been returned to residential use. Within the rezoned area, twenty-two properties have been upgraded while three have deteriorated. For this encouraging trend to continue, owners need to be assured that they are investing their effort and money in a neighborhood that

will continue to improve and that will be legally protected from the future development of non-conforming intrusions. The zoning change accomplishes this.

••••

NEED A PAIR OF OLD SLIDING panel doors or a Victorian box lock? The Historic Huntsville Foundation's warehouse has these and many other old house parts that may be just what you need for your restoration project. The items are reasonably priced, well below normal.

Do you have an old mantle or newel post that is gathering dust in the basement? It may be just what someone else needs, and you can get a tax write-off by donating it to the Foundation. For more information, contact Ralph Allen at 539-0764.

••••

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE Foundation held its annual election at the April 14 meeting. Elected to the Board of Directors for the 1980-83 term were Billie Grosser, Lee B. James, Lynn Jones, Helen Middleton, Sarah Warren, and Laura Jo Wilbourn.

••••

AS EDITOR, I am deliriously happy to announce that with the summer issue, Lynn Jones will become the associate editor of the QUARTERLY. She will be contacting members to contribute articles and ideas for future issues of the publication. If you wish to volunteer or have suggestions, please contact either Lynn or myself.

••••

PRESERVATION: Reusing America's Energy



Preservation Week
May 11-17, 1980

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

FRANKLIN/ *continued*

Meanwhile a Nashville bank that holds two buildings in trust across the street from Batey's has contacted the Foundation and the O'More School of Design and forged ahead to create two apartments upstairs in those buildings. And another key property at the corner of one street is being renovated by its owner with plans in the works to redo the upper stories for apartments or office space.

There are words of caution to be taken before Main Street renovations of commercial buildings are undertaken.

Groups undertaking apartment renovations should first determine if there is a market for them. In Franklin's case there is a real need for housing and especially for apartments downtown.

Also, the work should progress slowly and cautiously. Unless all the architectural elements of the building are digested, preservationists risk hokeying up the building. There are design guidelines for Victorian commercial storefronts available from the Na-

tional Trust.

Another reminder is that apartment spaces should be kept large. When more than one apartment is squeezed into an 1,800 square foot space, problems arise.

Also, to take advantage of the Tax Reform Act of 1976, which allows tax breaks to owners who wish to renovate income producing property, buildings should not be altered unless a preservation consultant is called in. Owners become ineligible for tax breaks if they sandblast a building, alter the structural and design features, or in anyway interfere with the integrity of an old building.

And those who would undertake the revitalization of upper stories of downtown buildings should not lose sight of the importance of working even harder for the retail redevelopment on the lower level. Main Street is the heart of our communities. It would be sad to create lovely apartments on the upper stories only to come downstairs to a ghost town. *