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From the Guest Editor

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FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

Many of the articles in this issue of *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly* are written by fifth grade students from Chapman, Colonial Hills, and Lincoln Elementary Schools who attend a weekly enrichment class. They were asked to choose a historic house or building in their neighborhood that they would like to know more about.

Most of the choices were easy. Oak Place and the Chapman house address each other across the valley in which Chapman Elementary sits. The McCormick House is almost equidistant between Lincoln and Colonial Hills. Other buildings—the Church of the Nativity, the Depot, the Weeden—are popular structures with Huntsville schoolchildren who have studied local history in the third grade.

The invitation to write these articles was the impetus to plan a field trip to visit and photograph the chosen houses and then go on to the Heritage Room in the Huntsville Public Library. This invitation also sparked a study of preservation and a walk around downtown with an eye out for examples of adaptive reuse. The Quarterly also offered an opportunity for two fourth graders to find out about tree preservation in our city, and, while they were at the City Greenhouse, to view the mysterious Big Spring lion.

Many of these children had never walked downtown, didn't know about the Heritage Room (with its scholarly green lamps), had never used a vertical file, and, more significantly, had never talked to their family members, historians and public officials in their community, and elders in their churches about history and public policy that affect their lives.

Their writings are sometimes whimsical (two are from the point-of-view of very old rodents) and are often filled with facts that are new only to the young who are learning Huntsville history for the first time.

The opportunity to research and talk and write about their community has taken these students out of walled-in classrooms and made learning immediate and personal for them.