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## From the Editor... Elise Stephens

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## ***From the Editor...Elise Stephens***

This issue grew from a poem to a grandmother's tale for her grandchildren to a "witch house," all in the course of exploring the possibilities of the theme "Home Is Where The Hearth Is." Before TV, the fireplace was the focal point of the family: lives were shared, as hours unfolded in story-telling and memory-gathering around the fire. The idea was to consider the hearth as a preservation icon, capturing the emotional attachment to home and place that is at the heart of preservation. But there is another side to the warm hearth: the all-too-often burned-out chimney standing gaunt against the sky. That, too, is a preservation icon of sorts. Issues like this one do not come about by design as much as by happenstance. The creative joy is derived from weaving an unexpected welcome mat for each piece so that our readers open/enter each expectantly and exit satisfied, ready for the next.

The hearth of the issue is located in "The Witch House," the name and design Dale Rhoades has introduced to Huntsville architecture, which is an adaptation and inspiration from Old Salem's famous "Witch House." The style is called New England Medieval. It originated in England and was brought to this country by the New England settlers.

The first time Dale saw the Salem house, it spoke to her not in frightening terms but esthetically. Here was a design as singular in its stark simplicity as in its stately proportions. What could be simpler? Or more compelling? Could its outward design convey such a sense of magic that one is drawn to approach and seek entry? And what would be awaiting the visitor? What could one expect? Suspend skepticism and toss adult reason.

Enter *Narnia*. Leave your worries and cares at the door. You are about to enter a house of fantasy, a story-book place where witches, bears and little boys and girls mingle freely, and you may gain a quickening sense of possibility as childhood memories wash over you, renewing your spirits.

Come, my friends, the door opens.

Memory will do what science and medicine cannot do and return us to our childhoods, Joe Bramm has a Grandmother's Tale for us to share with our young ones. We already have our hearth and our bears. Now we need a special little boy, or girl for that matter, a grandchild. Joe supplies the rest: A story she wrote out of love and the desire to plant a simple tale with a simple moral in her grandchild's mind where it could last a lifetime and be as fresh as the spring

jonquils. Like most of life's most valued lessons, the admonition not to "fool with the fire" is one dear to the hearts and hearths of all preservationists. Joe has done us a favor by putting into our hands a story we can use to teach youth that necessary bit of wisdom.

Memories are also awakened for us by Lois Mason Miller. The Lyric, one of her favorite retreats, burned down, twice! Geographer, Marilyn O. Dabbs, describes a way of life now gone, giving a scholar's reason for the deserted homes and scattered remnants of chimneys she had studied in Jackson County.

The bitter taste of fires comes through an excerpt from Elizabeth Chapmans' *Changing Huntsville*, to which I have added an afterword. Then, Margaret Anne Goldsmith Hanaw brings the issue to an ironic close, with her soul-searching poem which brings up another preservation question: When—if ever—is it all right to burn or destroy a house that nobody wants; yet, however humble, refuses to go gently into that good night?

We begin celebrating hearths and life. We conclude lamenting the perilous effects of fire on preservation. From one icon to another, this issue takes a natural although serendipitous course. Joe Bamm's story needed a setting, and Dale Rhoades gave it that. The little bear of Joe's story actually lives in the Witch's House. All the photographs in Joe's story were taken for this issue by Dale and Dick. By bringing together two disparate undertakings, a magical world has been created. *Thanks Dale. Thanks Joe.*

Lastly, a hearty thanks for a job well done to Suzi Bolton who has stepped down as chair.