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From the Chair... Ben Walker

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From the Chair...Ben Walker

As the son of a naval officer, my childhood and early teens were spent bouncing up and down the East Coast from Charleston to Boston. My parents, having a keen interest in the history of this nation, made sure I was exposed to every possible site and building within their reach from the North Church in Boston to the Battery in Charleston. I never minded this as some youths might. To the contrary, it was fundamental in my forming a lifelong interest in historical buildings and places which has increased with each passing year.

Even with this exposure I think my most vivid early teen memory concerning historic places involves the Huntsville Pilgrimage. I made that tour in the spring of 1955, less than a year after arriving in Huntsville. As a lad of 16 I was deeply impressed by the beauty and the history of the homes in the areas we toured. I have a vivid memory of an older couple standing near me commenting that "this is as good as Charleston." I also remember the feeling of civic pride their comment generated even though I was an insignificant teenager who had lived in Huntsville only for about one year. I think the experience points out both the uniqueness of Huntsville and the value of the Pilgrimage. I doubt that my youthful experience was an isolated occurrence. How nice it is to live in a city that has such an undertaking and has pursued it for such a long time!

The same is also true with regard to Maple Hill Cemetery and the many people who work so hard to preserve and promote it. I applaud the tireless efforts of those involved. Like most worthwhile efforts, much of this goes unnoticed and unfortunately a considerable amount is consumed overcoming bureaucratic opposition. Maple Hill is a treasure to be cherished; thank goodness for those who stand in the breach.

We at Historic Huntsville Foundation are excited and pleased to support both the Huntsville Pilgrimage and the Maple Hill Cemetery preservation efforts and tour. I encourage all of you as members to take advantage of these events and obtain a full appreciation of what we have that is unique to Huntsville.