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From the (new) Editor

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From the (new) Editor

As I undertake the job as Editor of the Historic Huntsville Foundation *Quarterly* (I become official July 15), I am a longtime member of the Historic Huntsville Foundation and a regular reader of the *Quarterly*. Elise H. Stephens, its longtime Editor, has done a wonderful job, and I looked forward to each issue. She left big shoes for me to fit into. But I am not Elise Stephens. You will notice things may change: the format may change, the content may change; but you will also notice that the *Quarterly* is about preservation as it has always been about preservation.

The history and progress of Huntsville has been a part of my life since I moved here with my family in 1952. I attended old Huntsville Junior High where the Annie Merts parking lot is now and was in the last class to attend Huntsville High in what is now the Annie Merts Center. I remember when California Street wasn't paved past Lowell Drive and a drive down Drake Avenue was a ride in the country. Because my family lived across the street from Maple Hill Cemetery, I spent a lot of time wandering through the cemetery reading the history of the area on the stones. Huntsville is home and its history is a part of my past.

I mourned the passing of the old Courthouse where on Saturdays one could still hear four different preachers declaiming from the four sets of stairs leading into the Courthouse. Tom Dark's was the place to get a 20¢ sundae and read the latest horror comics. We walked to school, the movies, and the pool in Big Spring Park in the summers. Here was a place where men still wore hats and tipped them. Huntsville was a place where the stores downtown had ceiling fans and movie houses advertised air conditioning. Huntsville was a place where the mill villages were complete within themselves with company stores, schools, and churches.

Huntsville has changed in the years since I've lived here: the Elks Building is gone, the Baptist Church has moved from West Clinton, the Lyric Theater with its Saturday matinees is gone, the Wimpy's Grill is no more, but we still have Lily Flagg's house, the Steamboat Gothic house has been saved, Lincoln School is left of the mill village schools, and as Bob Gamble mentions in his speech included in this

issue, I can walk from Maple Hill Cemetery to downtown without passing a used car lot or a weed-strewn vacant lot. Huntsville has much saved and much more to preserve. It is the purpose of the Historic Huntsville Foundation to preserve significant buildings and sites and to increase the public's awareness of the value of these buildings.

But it is not just buildings alone that need preserving. We need to preserve the ambience of place. The ambience is tied to the people who use the buildings, the activities that take place in the buildings, and the memories we have of the buildings. What do these places evoke within us? Thomas Wolfe said, "You can't go home again." Going back home is going back to feelings in a place. Huntsville High on Billie Watkins will always be the place I met my husband; I can go right to that seat in the auditorium where I was sitting when we met even though the seats have been changed many times; it is the feeling of the place. Who remembers Camerons? Its reputation? Our feelings are tied to place and the buildings in those places.

The Historic Huntsville Foundation is interested in the history and future of Huntsville. I am interested in strengthening our readers' knowledge of the past and the present value of our heritage. As Editor, I hope to make the *Quarterly* a valuable resource to its readers. I plan to encourage letters to the editor and use letters in a regular column; I solicit from the membership old photographs of Huntsville and its environs as well as topic ideas. Perhaps we can run a mystery photograph in each issue for readers to identify. Are you interested in *how to* articles from experts and experienced restorers?

My special thanks to Frances Osborn Robb for her patience in teaching me how to use new and complex software, to Diane Ellis for allowing me to wade into this job rather than jump into it, and to publication committee members, Lynn Jones and Pat Ryan, for their support and legwork.

This *Quarterly* is dedicated to the unknown builders of Madison County's old log houses. I hope you enjoy Miller's history of log houses in Madison County, the Ezells' renewal process, the Allens' restoration, and Robert Gamble's talk on vigilance in preservation.



**Fig. 1 Log house, Little Cove Road past McMullen Lane,
Madison County.**

See page 10. Courtesy Debra Miller.