

# The Historic Huntsville Quarterly

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Volume 24  
Number 2 *Log Houses: Building Blocks in  
Madison County, Alabama*

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Article 8

6-21-1998

## The Historic Huntsville Quarterly of Local Architecture and Preservation: Log Houses: Building Blocks in Madison County Alabama, Vol.24, No.2, Spring 1998

Historic Huntsville Foundation

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Historic Huntsville Foundation (1998) "The Historic Huntsville Quarterly of Local Architecture and Preservation: Log Houses: Building Blocks in Madison County Alabama, Vol.24, No.2, Spring 1998," *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*. Vol. 24: No. 2, Article 8.

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THREE DOLLARS

SUMMER 1998

THE  
**HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE QUARTERLY**  
OF LOCAL ARCHITECTURE AND PRESERVATION



**LOG HOUSES**  
BUILDING BLOCKS IN MADISON COUNTY ALABAMA

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Founded 1974

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Cover:

**Log House from New Hope, Madison County,  
relocated to Lacey's Spring.**

Courtesy Jan Allen.

**The Historic Huntsville Quarterly  
of Local Architecture and Preservation**

Volume XXIV, No.2

Spring, 1998

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## Thank you from the 1998 *Moveable Feast* Chairman and the Historic Huntsville Foundation

While planning *Twickenham by Twilight: A Moveable Feast*, many ideas surfaced. Although our making changes to a longstanding event could meet with concern, we trudged forward with blind faith in these changes to the *Moveable Feast*. Our faith in Historic Huntsville Foundation was met with an abundance of support, guidance, and generosity. For that, I am truly grateful.

The homeowners, Dr. & Mrs. Michael Caruso, Mr. & Mrs. Claude Dorning, and Mr. Randy Roper, could not have been more helpful. Their gracious hospitality and assistance with trays, preparation areas, and manicured landscapes were greatly appreciated. The musicians provided a lively atmosphere as guests strolled from home to home, tasted the wonderful foods, and visited with friends. The Classical-Country Connection, the Weatherly Recorders, and Strings & Things will no doubt be highly sought for entertainment by those who enjoyed the musicians' contributions to the *Moveable Feast*.

Also, many thanks to the individuals who helped me during the planning and execution of the *Moveable Feast*: Diane Ellis, Freeda Darnell, Lynda Doud, Ginger Fail, Shirley Fugit, Julie Lockwood, Suzanne O'Connor, Gerald Patterson, Dale Rhoades, Nancy Van Valkenburgh, and Sibyl Wilkinson. The Foundation members who prepared food and who also served as sponsors of the event cannot be thanked enough.

Because of the efforts of the volunteers, sponsors, donors, and organizers of the *Moveable Feast*, we have raised \$20,000 toward renovation of the 1896 Hundley Building. In the next issue of **Foundation Forum**, we will acknowledge the individual donors to the *Moveable Feast*. Raising the remaining funds needed to renovate the building will continue; we will use monies made from sales of reprints of our cookbook *Huntsville Entertains*. The *Moveable Feast*, begun as a promotion of the cookbook, has encouraged *Huntsville Entertains*' rebirth.

Sarah Lauren Van Valkenburgh Kattos  
*Moveable Feast* Chairman

## From the Chairman

We at the Foundation would all like to give a hearty welcome aboard to Margaret J. Vann, our new *Quarterly* editor. She comes highly recommended and immensely qualified for the position. This comes as no surprise to me as I have known Margaret since we were together at Huntsville High School. I won't mention the year. It is reassuring to know that our *Quarterly* will continue in a very professional form.

I thank Sarah Lauren Kattos for her efforts in making this year's *Moveable Feast* the best ever. I also extend my thanks to all those who participated in the event. I know much hard work went into making it spectacular. These *hard won* funds will be used with great care in the restorations of our new home, the Hundley Building.

Speaking of the Hundley Building, we are progressing in our renovation efforts to put the Building into full service, although not at a pace we all desire. Our Task Force committee is meeting regularly and has evolved, what I think is, the best plan for using the Building. The first step will involve some major demolition in the interior, specifically removing the 1960s bank vault. After consideration, this removal appears to be the best approach to realize fully the original nature of the Building. The demolition will take time; however, I think we will be best served if we move forward methodically and deliberately in each step. As many know, we have already put the Building to good use on several occasions, including activities during Preservation Week. Our Board of Directors is holding meetings in the Building, and we plan to have our office relocated on the second floor soon.

A wonderful attribute of preservation, as applied to buildings and places, is the great variety of subjects it encompasses. Log houses are an area we tend to overlook, and we assume them to be extinct. It is surprising to learn how many log structures are still around if you know where to look. I hope this *Quarterly* will stimulate your interest in looking beneath the layers of siding concealing many of these historic structures in our area. The potentially new areas of activity for the Foundation may be in finding and preserving these structures .

**Ben Walker**

## 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.

## Three Generations of Early Yeomen's Houses in Madison County Alabama

Debra Miller

Between 1800 and 1850, settlers poured into North Alabama. The earliest settlers were trappers and traders who built temporary cabins and usually stayed only one or two seasons in one location. Many settlers married Native Americans and became influential in the state's history. However, according to a 1975 survey of Alabama folk houses published in 1975 by Eugene Wilson of the Alabama Historical Commission, their homes have long disappeared.

Many dwellings survive from later immigrants who moved into the territory that would become the state of Alabama. Among these slightly later immigrants were merchants, doctors, and lawyers. However, the overwhelming majority were agriculturalists. Some of the latter were wealthy planters seeking fresh land and younger sons of planters seeking their own estates.

However, the overwhelming majority were yeomen farmers. Research data indicates that more than 77 percent of southern immigrants were yeomen. For our purposes, the term *yeomen* refers to farmers who owned no more than five slaves; for most historians, the term *yeomen* includes farmers who owned a few slaves.

These early immigrants were, to a large degree, culturally homogeneous. Case studies of several families support Thomas Perkins Abernethy's claim that the majority of North Alabama settlers emigrated from Tennessee (Abernethy 40). However, for many, their roots lay in the established southern states along the eastern seaboard. Of seven families researched, all originated in England, although one had a Scots branch.

Like other settlers, yeomen came to the area seeking economic advancement. Despite hardships, they never quit striving for economic prosperity.

These early farmers owned the land they farmed or hoped to own it. They had few other financial resources. This is reflected in their houses. Although wealthy planters built grand houses in the area that is now Madison County (fig. 2), the yeomen built simpler dwellings.



**Fig. 2 Echols Hill, the Col. Leroy Pope House, begun 1814.**  
Courtesy Huntsville Madison County Public Library.

Although some yeomen settled in lower elevations, historians note that yeomen congregated in the hills. In North Alabama, these hilly areas are part of the *upland South*, according to scholar Henry Glassie (39). Two historians, Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton and Monroe Lee Billington, offer diverse theories to explain this. Hamilton suggests that the gummy soil of the lowlands required a high amount of initial labor to harvest the first crops. Yeomen, with limited resources, could not afford to wait more than one growing season to harvest a crop. Therefore, Hamilton claims, the yeomen selected the sandy soil of the mountains, where they could clear the land, plant their crops, and construct a shelter all within a growing season (Hamilton 11). On the other hand, Billington suggests that the planters used the yeomen to test the soil. When the soil proved rich, they bought the yeomen's land and forced them to move to less desirable or remote lands (Billington 32).

[An alternative explanation is more in keeping with the author's economic thesis. Yeomen practiced animal husbandry and lived off the bounty of streams and uncleared lands. The hills of north Alabama were well suited to their small, relatively self-sufficient family farms.

Early 19th century agriculturalists required fertile soils and access to navigable rivers. The Tennessee Valley's rich coves, with their relatively easy access to river transport, were highly desirable.

During the early decades of statehood, when cotton dominated Alabama's economy, fine, relatively long staple cotton could be produced on the flatlands of Alabama's coves and command relatively high prices. The uplands could grow short staple cotton, but it was more difficult and tedious to deseed by hand and with the earliest machines, and it brought less on the market.

Hence, flat cove land was expensive because of its potential productivity, which in a cotton-dominated economy could be translated into wealth. The uplands, viewed as less valuable, sold for less and hence were available to yeomen's thinner purses.

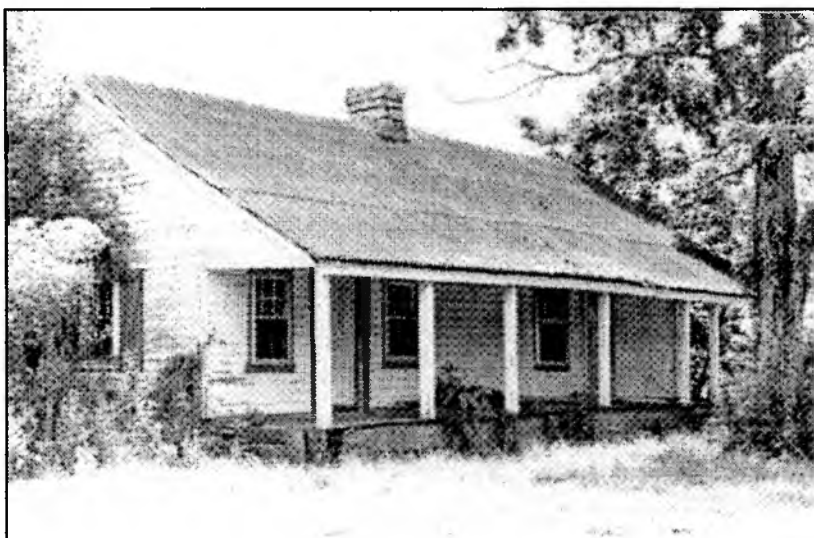
Editor's note: FR.]

Today, remnants of the settlement period remain in the Alabama Uplands. Engene Wilson's 1975 survey of Alabama's folk houses located many such dwellings, including typical settlers' dwellings. He classified the houses he studied into three generations of buildings.

Included in his first generation are houses constructed entirely of logs. These houses were symmetrically proportioned, with small windows, if any. Most were one and a half stories tall (Wilson 25).

Most commonly, these early log houses had two end chimneys. Others had a single massive chimney in the middle; their shape explains their nickname: *saddlebag* houses (see fig.3, page 8). Many had one room; they are called single pen houses.

Some were double pen houses, comprising two rooms (fig. 4, page 8). Some of these double pen dwellings were dogtrots, consisting of two rooms connected by a roofed central walkway. [Editor's note: The Old English word *pen* refers to a small enclosure; it survives in the word *pigpen*.]



**Fig. 3 First generation saddlebag house, modernized,  
Poplar Ridge Road, south of Cherry Tree Road, Madison County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.



**Fig. 4 First generation dogtrot house, modernized,  
Poplar Ridge Road, between Martin Lane and Cherry Tree Road,  
Madison County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.



**Fig. 5 First generation log house, modernized, Ray Road,  
near Sharpe's Hollow, Madison County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.



**Fig 6 Second generation dogtrot house, modernized,  
Upper Hampton Road, Limestone County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.

Later, as manufactured goods became available to settlers, houses became a mix of logs, milled lumber and manufactured hardware: second generation houses (Wilson 25). While similar to houses of the first generation, second generation houses used fewer handworked materials and had less hand craftsmanship in them; they are typically one story (fig. 6, page 9; also see fig. 1).

Houses constructed entirely of milled lumber belong to Wilson's third generation of folk houses (figs. 7 & 8). These houses retained many features of first and second generation houses, but had larger windows (Wilson 26).



**Fig. 7 Third generation house**  
**Section Road, Gurley, Madison County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.



**Fig. 8 Third generation house,  
Church Street near Second, Gurley, Madison County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.



**Fig. 9 Yeoman's house, corner of County Lake and Hurricane  
Creek Roads, Madison County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.

At first glance, the three generations may be difficult to distinguish (fig. 9, page 11). Later additions—clapboard siding, for example—may make it difficult to assign a house to a specific generation. While stone chimneys are common in the older first and second generation houses, and brick chimneys are common in the third generation, chimney fabric is not, by itself, a reliable indicator of the generation to which a house belongs. The early house sleuth looks for signs of the log structural members that characterize first and second generation Alabama folk houses (figs. 10, 11 & 12). In log construction, beams project under the roof soffit, indicating that logs are under the siding (fig. 13, page 14).

Early folk houses have symbolic associations. Politicians celebrated the log house in its simplest form. For politicians like Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln, birth in a log cabin symbolized their rise from humble beginnings and their connection to the common man (Bealer 10).



**Fig. 10 Chimney detail, yeoman's house,  
Oran Whitaker Road between Nebo and  
New Hope-Cedar Point Roads, Madison County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.



**Fig. 11 Chinking detail, yeoman' house,  
Paint Rock Road, Madison County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.



**Fig. 12 Chimney base and joinery details,  
yeoman's house, Paint Rock Road, Madison County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.



**Fig. 13 Detail showing beam projecting under soffit, yeoman's house, Upper Hampton Road, Limestone County.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.

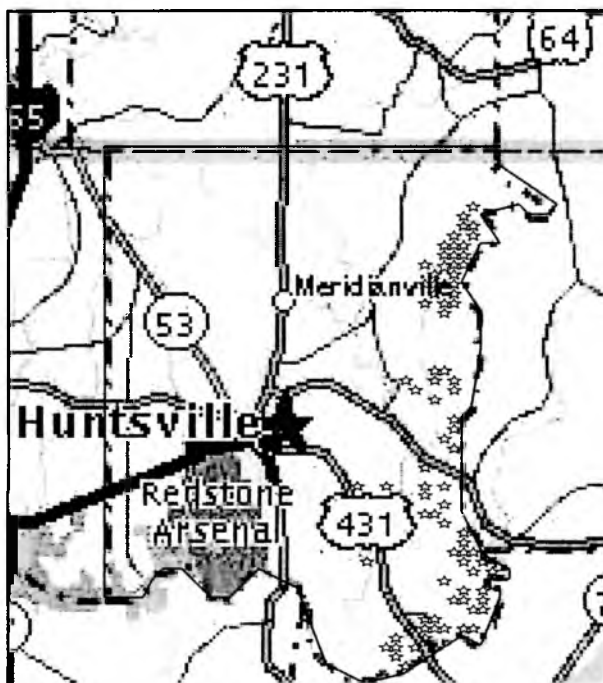
Some yeomen may have expressed their upward mobility in clapboarding their log houses and adding architectural ornament, when these materials became available. Others may have realized that the planters' large, symmetrical, central-halled, and porched residences grandly echoed the plan that could be seen in their own log dogtrot houses.

Unfortunately, North Alabama's early log houses are rapidly disappearing. Neglect, ignorance, and vandalism are taking their toll on them. Some have been abandoned. Others are used as barns or storage buildings. Others have been covered with vinyl or metal siding that can trap moisture and hide worseing structural problems.

Preservationists view the relocation of historic properties as a last resort, since it separates dwellings from their contextual settings (see "Log House Restoration", page 37). Nevertheless, many log structures are moved arbitrarily to backyards and suburbs. The buildings

are often stripped of the original wood siding that protected the underlying log structure. When this happens, the oldest wood is exposed to the elements, inviting accelerated deterioration. Finally, some people replace the chinking with a cement-based material, not understanding that the chinking must expand and contract to prevent structural damage.

Madison County contains many fine examples of first, second, and third generation folk houses (fig. 14). Despite their decreasing numbers, enough of these dwellings remain to suggest their prominent role in the region's history. These yeomen's log houses attest to the craftsmanship, determination, and aspirations of the 19th century settlers of Madison County.



**Fig. 14 Map showing approximate locations of early houses, Madison County, located by Debra Miller.**  
Courtesy Debra Miller.

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*Debra Miller is on the staff of Athens State University and is completing Ph.D. work at Middle Tennessee State University. Her article is based on her survey of yeomen's houses in Madison and Limestone Counties.*



Fig. 1 **Cabaniss-Ezell House**, 1998, after renewal.  
Courtesy Gene Ezell.

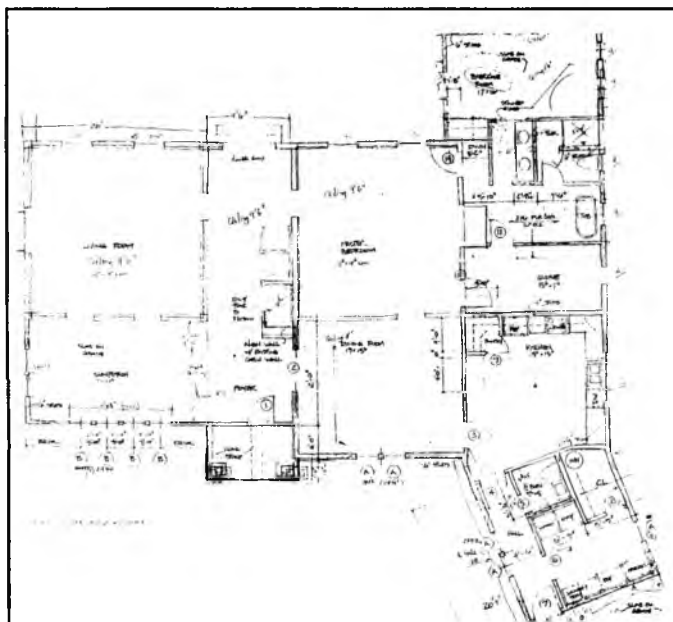


Fig. 2 **First floor plan of Cabaniss-Ezell House**, late 1980s.  
Courtesy Gene Ezell.

# **The Cabaniss-Ezell House Renewal**

Gene Ezell and Frances Robb

## **Preface**

The Cabaniss-Ezell log house was built prior to 1890 as a 2-story double pen dogtrot (fig. 1). It faced Old Donegan Road, which ran along the edge of the bluff, past James Donegan's house around to the Monte Sano Hotel. In the late 1920s, "modern" conveniences were added: dining room, attached kitchen and bathroom, and two concrete slab porches. The dogtrot was closed in. The style of the addition was that of farmhouses of the era. Electricity and telephone were brought in at that time by the Monte Sano Construction Company.

The land was retained by Robert Fearn, one of the founders of Viduta, when that community was first laid out in 1833. James B. Cabaniss, Chancery Court Registrar, acquired it from Fearn's estate.

According to Huntsville's premier historian Dr. Frances Cabaniss Roberts, James' twin brother Willis had the house built and lived there; a dedicated naturalist, he loved the mountain. After his twin's death in 1890, J.B. Cabaniss mortgaged the property. In 1896 he signed the mortgage over in default to Nellie Shelton.

Nellie Shelton sold the log house to Carrie Gilliland of Shelby County, Tennessee, who obviously was the source of the 1902 Memphis newspapers found stuffed between some of the logs. Ira Terry acquired the property in 1924, registering it in trust for his daughter Mary Alice.

Following World War II, living space was scarce in Huntsville. Drywall was installed throughout the house and propane heaters were installed over the sheet metal-covered fireplaces so that Mary Alice and Bobby Yarbrough could occupy it more comfortably. Numerous tenants later lived in the house through the space boom years of Huntsville, until the log house was all but abandoned about 1970.

In 1945 Old Donegan Road was vacated by Madison County and a driveway was built from Lookout Drive. Access today is thus to what

was historically the rear of the house. When the Ezells bought the house, a low stone wall marked the boundary of the abandoned bluff road, and they found an old brick walk, buried in the yard, leading from the old road to the house. Many of the stones from the boundary wall found their way into the stonework of the Ezell's refurbishment.

The Ezells approached the renovation with the idea of making the house livable in modern terms with modern materials, but preserving the historic character, i.e., "adaptive reuse" (fig. 2, page 20). An example is provided in the southern yellow "heart" pine of the floors. The wood used to supplement the original flooring came from the old Merrimack Mill on Triana Boulevard. The Craftsman-style entrance doors and staircase were built from the same wood. The Ezells have enjoyed the support of many friends (and a few doubters) and for the most part some very good subcontractors throughout this project, but they would particularly like to thank David Ely of Jones and Herrin Architecture/Interior Design for encouragement and serving as final arbiter of appropriate details.

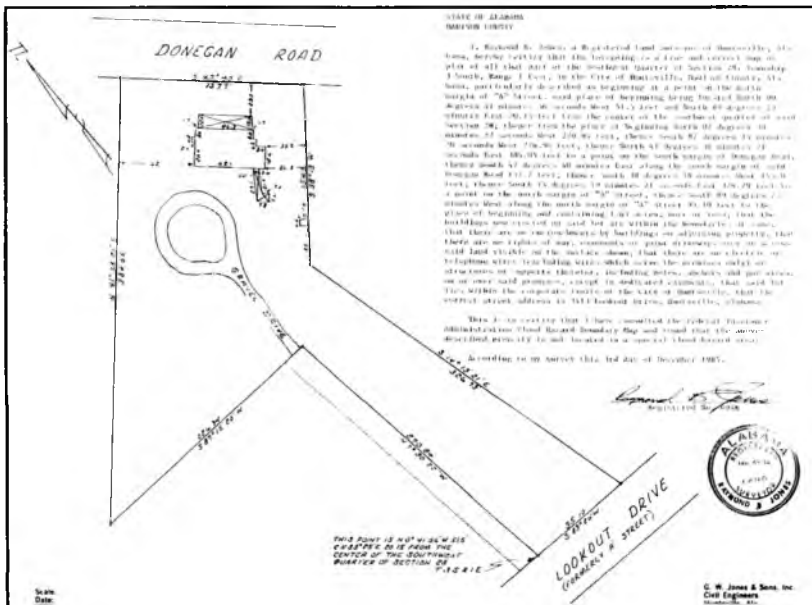


Fig. 3 Surveyor's map of Ezell property, Monte Sano, 1985. Raymond B. Jones, G.W. Jones & Sons, Inc., Huntsville, Ala. Courtesy Mary Ann and Gene Ezell.

Gene and Mary Ann Ezell bought the old log house on Monte Sano in December 1984. They set to work immediately. On February 26, 1998, they moved in.

Fourteen years is a long time to invest in a project, even if it is compelling, the end result alluring, and even if there are small steady rewards along the way.

When their interviewer first met Mary Ann and Gene Ezell, it was June 1, 1998, and they gave her a private house tour. She touched the old shaped timbers, as Gene pointed out which ones are chestnut, poplar, and cedar. She admired the new bathrooms.

She was shown the original virgin heart pine floor boards, the purchased heart pine that supplements the originals, and the stone floors of the additions, additions that follow the footprints and the slant of earlier additions: porch, kitchen, and covered walkway to the well. She walked the concrete-floored breezeway that covers the long dried-up shallow well and leads to the new garage beyond.

She noted a thoughtful and pleasing clarity, inside and out. This is a house that has been lived in, loved, enhanced, repaired, and neglected throughout its long life. Dozens of families have lived here, some for a short time, others for years.

When the Ezells bought the property, the land was densely overgrown, the house decrepit (fig. 3). The seller offered to demolish the old house so they could begin anew.

The Ezells had another idea. From the first, they intended to rescue the old log structure and give it renewed life as a family home. Today, they are delighted to share the house and their experiences of it, to show photographs of each part of the work, and to talk about the slow tedious tasks, danger, difficulties, solutions, and triumphs.

They are also eager to explain what they have learned about the house's history and how that history was expressed in the original structure and its additions. They determined to adapt the house so that it would survive, not as a museum piece but as a family home.

At the same time, they have rehabilitated the original structure and respected the plan and footprints of later additions. As a result of what they learned, Mary Ann and Gene have helped the house tell its own history. Differences in construction and materials simplify a complex history into three main epochs: early (the original 2-story dogtrot log house), later (mostly early 20th century additions), and now (the Ezells' recent modifications).

Now, the Ezells sit at the kitchen table with their visitor, telling her about the house and their work on it. She begins to understand the complexities and problems, the careful analysis and demanding physical activity, their vision and their adaptability, their temperaments and experience, and how these came together to produce so pleasing a house and so clear a history.

In the 1970s, the Ezells were working full time (she as an educator, he as a physicist) and living with their sons in a split foyer 1960s house. They spent some of their spare time looking for land—ten acres or so—“out somewhere” in the woods and hills and among wildflowers.



Fig. 4 **Cabaniss-Ezell House**, 1984, before renewal.  
Courtesy Gene Ezell.

Their youngest son had a friend who lived on Monte Sano. This brought them casually to the mountain, where in 1984 they saw a sale sign, scrubby wilderness, and in the distance a decrepit house (fig. 4).

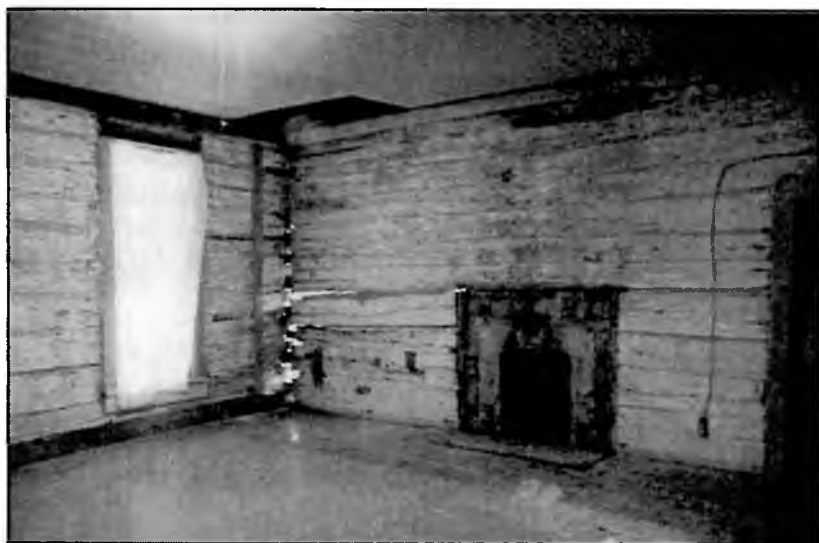
On closer inspection, the house was a two-story log house with a green 1950s asphalt roof, a screened porch across the front and an open back porch. From the kitchen in the far right corner, a covered walkway slanted off to a shallow dry well.

In 1984 the owners were Bobby Yarbrough and his wife Mary Alice Terry. They were well connected to Monte Sano's history, for Mary Alice's father, Ira Terry, had been secretary of the Mountain Heights Development Company, involved with the mountain's real estate. When the Yarbroughs decided to sell, they bulldozed a stable and horse shed—both past repair—dug a hole and buried the debris.

The Ezells bought the property in December 1984, planning to fix up part of the house and move in, perhaps within the year—a schedule that soon changed. An ice storm that winter felled trees and heaped debris in the yard; they spent their first six months as owners cutting down eleven badly damaged trees and severely pruning twenty-five others. With the help of their teenaged sons, Ben and Curt, Mary Ann and Gene did most of this work themselves.

The Ezells then turned to the house itself, ripping out the drywall that covered the crumbling whitewash of the interior walls and then moving to the more difficult tasks of straightening the wall and floors, then rebuilding the chimneys that were riddled with holes. The inside wall of one chimney had collapsed into the firebox. Gene tied himself to the roof and tossed the chimney's top stones down into the yard, then pulled the chimneys down so that they could be rebuilt.

Gene described the next task: stripping the interior walls of the decayed drywall (added by the Yarbroughs in the 1940s), so that the logs could be cleaned and the crumbling chinking replaced before new drywall was installed. He told of the unexpected and hazardous discovery of scores of brown recluse spiders in the mud, newspaper, and scrap board infill they were removing from the walls.



**Fig. 5 Cabaniss-Ezell House, view of corner damage, late 1980.**  
Courtesy Gene Ezell.

Vertical boards at one corner of the exterior turned out to cover huge and hideous gaps: where the log ends had once fitted tightly, up and down the corner, there was a 6-inch gap where they had rotted away (fig. 5). When that began to happen, the massive 20-foot logs could no longer hold their “true,” and they began to bulge outward, away from vertical, and dropping six inches besides. Each log had to be lifted to level, pulled back into place, shimmed, and refastened. A 50-foot water level made out of a garden hose indicated progress with Gene’s ingenious system of come-aways and jacks. Nevertheless, even with the photographic documentation before her eyes, this seemed to the interviewer an impossibly difficult task: one false tug and the entire wall might collapse!

These were, Gene judged, the most dangerous tasks they performed on the old house. The Ezells wanted to do as much of the work as they could themselves, but both explained that, even if they had wanted to hire out many tasks, they could have found no willing or experienced workers. As a result, they planned each task, devised the materials and devices needed to carry it out, then worked each weekend until the task was accomplished.

By now the interviewer understood that Gene had a physicist's ability to analyze a task and then take pleasure in devising appropriate machinery to carry it out successfully. She was not surprised that the chimneys came down, just as predicted, in the planned locations. Gene explained that he had also had early experiences with carpentry; his father had been a "moonlight carpenter" in Clarksville, Tennessee, where Gene grew up.



**Fig. 6 Cabaniss-Ezell House, closeup of corner, repair in progress, late 1980s.**  
Courtesy Gene Ezell.

Mary Ann Ezell's background was different. The child of an old Tennessee family, she had grown up in Nashville, where, if her father needed something done to the house, he simply hired someone. Her contribution lay in her steady vision of the end result, her cheerful enthusiasm, her patience (which she says improved during the fourteen years of the project) and her sense that an important goal is not gained in a day, but step by step, often over a period of years: a useful attitude for a teacher. However, Mary Ann learned new skills too, pitching in with sawing and nailing down subfloors, staining siding, and smoothing caulking.



**Fig. 7 Exterior of Cabaniss-Ezell House,**  
late 1980s.

Courtesy Gene Ezell.

Gene and Mary Ann began to work on cleaning the exterior logs and removing the old mortar. The mortar had at some time been covered over with concrete, cured in place around rows of nails. The hardness of the concrete meant that it had to be pounded out in 6-inch chunks, nails and all. Removing the old material, straightening walls and floors, reching and daubing the exterior took three years of slow and steady work, interspersed with getting the chimneys rebuilt and building a garage.

A stonemason from Grant rebuilt the chimneys about a year and a half apart. The sequence was repair the first pen (one-half of the log structure), rebuild the first chimney, repair the second pen, and rebuild the other chimney (fig. 7).

While the first chimney was rebuilt, something new was also going up: a garage—a “first” for the property—that could serve as a workroom and storage space for the duration of the project (fig. 8). That, comments Gene, was the easiest part of the project. They made their plans, purchased the materials, and he, Mary Ann, and their sons put it up, uneventfully and on schedule.



**Fig. 8 Gene and Mary Ann Ezell and sons in front of new garage, Cabaniss-Ezell House, late 1980s.**  
Courtesy Gene Ezell.

When the cracks between the logs were open and clean, the Ezells stuffed the openings with fiberglass insulation and installed screen wire ~ of an inch in from the final surface of the infill. Applying the latex-based caulk was slow and tedious, given the size and number of the openings and the small size of commercial caulking guns. Gene devised an ingenious air-driven tool, made of 4-inch plastic sewer pipe and an inner bellows of flexible clothes dryer duct, that could hold two quarts of caulk and deliver a wide swath (fig. 9). With Gene operating this giant gadget and Mary Ann following behind to smooth the caulk and remove the excess, the work progressed faster.

Even so, with so many openings to fill, even with Gene's ingenious tool, the pace of the project seemed, to their interviewer, excruciatingly slow. She asked the Ezells if they went home at the weekend with the feeling of accomplishment. "Yes, we did," Gene replied. "Every weekend, we could say we had cleared so many running feet of concrete or stuffed so much fiberglass insulation into the openings or renewed so many feet of mortar. With that measurement, we could just move on to the next log, the next crack."



**Fig. 9 Gene Ezell and his air-powered caulking tool.**  
Courtesy Gene Ezell.

Gene reminded the interviewer that repetitive and arduous physical tasks have their own rewards, especially for people whose professional work made such different demands. She began to see how this couple could return each weekend to the mountain with enthusiasm and leave with the sense of tasks well done.

The Ezells proceeded to the next slow and tedious task. They took up all the floors, board by board. “We numbered each board,” commented Mary Ann, “not realizing that that would not be useful.” The floors had been painted blue, and the simplest solution to returning them to their original appearance was having them remilled. This process also showed up boards that had been damaged by beetles. Since the Ezells lost about fifty percent of the original floorboards from damage and remilling, the Athens firm that remilled the boards made new flooring from old boards to complete the reflooring project.

Meantime, with the boards up, the Ezells began the hot, musty, cramped task of removing hundreds of buckets of earth from beneath the floors. Organic matter had not been removed when the 20-foot by 50-foot log house was built, causing a musty smell in the house in damp weather. Besides, a crawl space was necessary. The dirt had to be dug and carried out by hand, because power equipment could not be fitted in. Fortunately, at least, the dirt was soft. Between the first-floor ceilings and second floors, generations of squirrels had nested and filled the 10-inch space with expended nutshells (more hundreds of buckets of debris!). Even a mummified rodent was found.

That done, the Ezells had work space to level the joists that were so uneven that the old floor had “waved like a potato chip.” Once the joists were level, the Ezells laid a subfloor.

The year 1991 saw a big breakthrough. With the exterior repaired and sealed, new windows installed in place of the dilapidated old ones, subfloors in place, and the walls bare to the original logs, the Ezells hired a contractor to frame in the replacement and expansion of the old 1920s addition and install a new roof. “Hiring out routine work was something we always intended to do,” they explained. “We did the rough work and the work we couldn’t find anyone else to do.”

They also framed in a new entry, incorporating the concrete flooring of the back porch as a footprint. An enlarged dining room, kitchen, and master bath overlaid the footprint of the original. Following the angled line of the 1920s covered walkway that led in the direction of the new garage, the Ezells framed in a workroom/laundry and a corridor from the kitchen to the new breezeway (overlying the concrete slab that covered the old well) and the new garage.

Installing the new roof was a job made more difficult by the height and steep pitch of the roof, several days of driving rain, and problems coordinating the work of the crew's supervisor and the crew. Historical aspects again showed up as three earlier roofs came to light: the original cedar shingles, one of red asphalt, and a recent green one.

Mary Ann and Gene put up siding, and Gene installed the windows. After the addition was complete on the exterior, a plumber roughed in new plumbing. The Ezells put up furring on the interior of the log rooms for new drywall. Gene installed the hallway, stairwell, and garden room (built over the original back porch). Drywall was put up and the flooring relaid by specialist contractors. The Grant stonemason laid flagstones: kitchen, bathroom, and garden room floors and a walkway outside.

By 1995, the Ezells explained that, with the dry wall completed and the floors in, the house had begun to look as if it might one day be a home. Nevertheless, they took each task at its own pace and though frustrated did not give up when it took two years to get the stairs built in the old dog-trot space. It took a while to find someone who could saw the staircase lumber from huge 20-foot salvaged heartpine beams. And then they found two woodworkers from Gurley who built the staircase (twice interrupting the project to work on other jobs). They had previously built the four exterior doors of wood from the same source.

The final major project was the kitchen cabinetry and counters. Mary Ann had already adapted the ingenious over-the-sink window design of the Terrys' 1920s kitchen. An Athens cabinetmaker who offered computer-aided design was hired to implement Mary Ann's unique cabinet concept and to install the cabinets (fig. 10).



**Fig. 10 Kitchen of Cabaniss-Ezell House,  
before and after, 1987.**  
Courtesy Gene Ezell.

They were then ready to install the countertops: an unusual black composition of minerals and Portland cement called Fireslate, the sort of material normally used for countertops in chemistry laboratories. After they read about this surface in a magazine, they got in touch with the manufacturer in Maine, and the countertops were ordered and installed by Gene. He then installed the kitchen appliances. The Ezells hired wall and trim painters. They explained that they could have done this work themselves but wanted to hurry the work. They could sense that moving-in time was at hand.

Patience, analytical skills, ingenuity, experience, an enjoyment of different kinds of physical labor, a love and respect for history and building materials, enthusiasm, and the ability to work together and to find a sense of accomplishment in slow, incremental progress: these qualities the Ezells possess in abundance.



**Fig. 11 Cabaniss-Ezell House ready for move-in day, 1998.**  
Courtesy Gene Ezell.

They are surely essential qualities for anyone interested in turning a decrepit old building into a modern home. But, perhaps, the most essential quality is the sense of vision, of the inviting home that one old house might become (fig. 11).

Move-in day was February 20, 1998. Although Gene recalls that doom and gloom was forecast, the moving company supervisor felt optimistic, and the weathermen once again proved inaccurate. The Ezells had a good omen: as they stood at a second floor window, a bluebird alighted on the porch roof in front of them!

*Gene Ezell is a physicist. With his wife Mary Ann, he has spent the past fourteen years renewing a late 19th century log house on Monte Sano. Frances Osborn Robb is an art and cultural historian and an occasional contributor to the Quarterly.*





**Fig. 1 Hollingsworth-Allen House, New Hope, Madison County,  
November 1994.**  
Courtesy Jan Allen.



**Fig. 2 Hollingsworth-Allen House, New Hope, Madison County,  
November 1994.**  
Courtesy Jan Allen.

## **Log House Restoration**

Jan Allen

The serenity of a log house nestled on the edge of a clearing caught our eyes again and again as we traveled throughout this area. At every opportunity, we toured log houses. The workmanship of hand-hewn logs, pegged construction, and dovetailed corners appealed to us. Life in a log house was very different from ours. If one needed something, one made it, grew it, or bartered for it. The log house represented ultimate self sufficiency; the log house was built from the trees on the land.

Next we became aware of deteriorating log houses, and with that awareness we developed a desire to restore one of these treasures. As we came across log houses that looked neglected, we would stop to see if they were for sale. None were for the log houses had special places in their family's history even if the funds or energy for restoration were not available.

In November 1994, we decided to advertise: "Wanted log house or log building." Our ad worked. Within two weeks, we received a call from Mrs. Hollingsworth regarding a log house that she had lived in as a child but now wished to sell and have moved from her property. My husband arranged a time to inspect the log house, located five miles north of New Hope on Old Gurley Pike; I was out of town. The building was a 2-room, dogtrot log house with 16-foot square rooms (fig. 1). The upper sills were each 46 feet long.

The log house had been occupied until the late 1980s, and in the interim had been used as a play and party place by trespassers. My husband liked what he saw and bought it, agreeing to have the house moved within six months. When I returned, we went out to see the log house. I was so shocked at its terrible condition that I was speechless (fig. 2). I thought my husband had lost his mind.

In later years the dogtrot had been crudely enclosed and a lean-to added in the back. A porch, which was falling in at one end, stretched across the front. The exterior was covered with weathered gold felt siding. Most of the logs under the siding appeared to be in good condition except for those around the fireplaces.



**Fig. 3 Hollingsworth-Allen House fireplace, November 1994 & December 1995.**

Courtesy Jan Allen.

Originally there had been a fireplace in each of the two rooms, but one had been dismantled some time in the past; the opening was crudely boarded up leaving a hole for a stove pipe (fig. 3). The old tin roof had leaked in a few places, and the ceiling was sagging. Layers of trash, old wallpaper, sheet rock, and rotted wood littered the floor.

Our first task was to photograph the house in its current condition. We have kept a photographic record of all the restoration phases. Our second task was to clean up the trash and secure the building from trespassers. We were anxious to move it to our farm where we could control access and work on it at our leisure.

Before moving the house, we made an assessment of what had to be accomplished. The lean-to, the wallboard and sheet rock on the interior walls, and the ceiling were removed and discarded. We found that one room still had milk paint on its logs. The exterior felt siding was also removed. It took the two of us several long, hard weekends to do the removal.

In April 1995, we retired and began working on the move preparation every day. Only sound lumber, samples of wallpaper layers, and artifacts were kept. The log house began to look better.

The chimney had been constructed with limestone cut to fit and required the use of very little mortar. Dismantled rock by rock, the chimney was hauled to the new site. The front porch flooring was removed in three large sections and hauled to the new site.

We conferred with the curator at Burritt Museum on sources for repairs and materials. He offered to look at the log house, give us an opinion on its construction date and his recommendations on the restoration process.

The curator felt the structure was built in the 1840s because of the nail construction; he thought the logs were chestnut. While we were at Burritt, he introduced us to Robert Ervin who did all Burritt's fireplace construction work. The curator also shared the museum's recipe for chinking and some material sources.

For the house's new location, we chose a site on the edge of the woods near the lake on our farm in Lacey's Spring. The new site was leveled, and cement pads were poured for the piled rocks that were to support the log house. A road to the site was enlarged to accommodate the heavy truck and trailer required to move the structure.

Hollis Kennedy agreed to move the house the first week in June. The tin roof was removed and the rafters were tented with tarpaulins until his crew arrived. Additional bracing boards were added on the sides and between the two rooms.

The house was 17 feet tall; however, the Whitesburg Bridge across the Tennessee River has a clearance of 15.5 feet. Therefore, we carefully numbered, lowered, and lay the rafters on the ceiling so they could be reassembled in their original location. Our part of the moving preparation was complete (fig. 4).



**Fig. 4 Roof rafters, disassembled, Hollingsworth-Allen House, June 1995.**

Courtesy Jan Allen.



**Fig. 5 Hollingsworth-Allen House in process of being raised, May 1995.**

Courtesy Jan Allen.



**Fig. 6 Moving day! June 1995.**

Courtesy Jan Allen.

We sat back watching as the log house was slowly raised (fig. 5, page 41). By jacking first one side and then the other, the structure was raised until it was high enough for the large trailer to be backed under it. This very precise process took two days. The jacking process freed the large rocks on which the house had rested; we moved these to the new site. Once the house was on the trailer, we obtained a permit from the Alabama State Highway Department for use of U.S. Highway 431 as part of the route to Lacey's Spring.

Moving day! We were excited (fig. 6, page 41). The 25-mile trip took all morning going a slow, steady speed with crews ahead warning traffic. The truck pulled carefully down our narrow road and then backed onto the new site. During the afternoon, the house was raised enough to remove the trailer. The jacks were left in place for a few days while we positioned the support rocks. At last the log house was on its new site. No damage was done to the log house during the raising, the move, or the lowering onto the rocks.

Our first job was to reset the rafters and to get the roof covered and protected from weather. Each rafter had a peg hole in the sill and was pegged at the apex where it met its counterpart from the other side of the roof. We discovered that the rafters were not spaced at regular intervals—they ranged from 22 to 29 inches apart. With the rafters in place, we recovered the roof with tarpaulins to protect the interior. Although the original roof had been covered with wooden shakes and later replaced with tin, we elected to recover the roof with tin (fig. 7).

Logs in the chimney areas needed to be replaced. Our son, Mike McGuire, heard about some people who had removed old logs from the exterior of their house. These logs had come from several houses in Lauderdale and Limestone counties; they were a mixture of chestnut, oak, and yellow poplar sold as one lot. We bought them and moved them to the site (we had thought we were finished with the moving process). We now had a store of extra logs to use for house repairs and building period furniture.

With help from the front end loader on our tractor and much ingenuity, my husband replaced the deteriorated logs on both house ends. We then replaced the roof with new tin and filled in the peak areas with wood boards salvaged from the exterior of the lean-to.



**Fig. 7 Replacing the tin roof,  
Hollingsworth-Allen House, September 1995.**  
Courtesy Jan Allen.

During November 1995, Robert Ervin rebuilt our chimney was rebuilt by Robert Ervin. Although the rebuilding process used much more mortar than the original chimney had contained, we were very pleased with the results. So that the fireplace can be used for cooking, we have had a crane hand built for it. By December 1995, the log house was enclosed.

Our focus shifted to the interior where we removed buckets of nails and tacks from the log walls; it was a job that we could do in all kinds of weather. Over the years, seven layers of newspaper and wallpaper had been glued and tacked to the log walls. At some time, the walls were sheet rocked with more paint and wallpaper on top of that. A 5-gallon bucket of nails was pulled from the walls in just one room. In later years, the ceiling boards had been moved below the rafters to provide nailing area for sheet rock.

We decided to shift the ceiling boards above the rafters in the traditional design. The old ceiling boards proved to be rotten and had to be discarded.

We had insufficient salvage lumber to redo the ceilings. The Davie Ashley sawmill in Elora, Tennessee, rough cut new ceiling boards from yellow poplar for use in the ceiling. These boards were stored in our barn to cure for 6 to 12 months.

Again using our trusty tractor, the porch flooring was repositioned. The old porch roof supports were 4 by 4s that we discarded as inappropriate. On our farm, we chose instead cedar trees of appropriate diameter and cut them to the required height removing branches but leaving the bark.

The cedar tree posts looked great. We reinstalled the porch rafters and put on the new tin porch roof. Hooks for a porch swing were still in place on the rafters.

Restoration of the log house was put on hold for 1997 while we built a house at the farm. Our long range plan is to fill the log house with period furniture and use it as a guest house.

We restarted the restoration this spring by opening up the dogtrot. The stack of ceiling boards is still calling to us from the barn. We have decisions to make on how to finish the interior: leave the milk paint, whitewash the logs, or leave them plain.

There is still much to be done in the restoration process and in researching of the log house's history. However, we always take time to sit and rock on the porch and enjoy the serenity of the log house.



**Fig. 8 Hollingsworth-Allen House, chimney rebuilding, December 1995.**

Courtesy Jan Allen.

*Jan Allen and her husband are in the process of restoring a small log house, relocated from New Hope to Lacey's Spring, to serve as a guest house. When they are not working on the house, visitors may find them rocking on the porch..*



**Fig. 1 View of Huntsville-Madison County Courthouse, 1950s.**  
Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

## **Eternal Vigilance: The Price of Preservation**

Robert Gamble

*Note:* edited excerpts of a talk by Robert Gamble, Senior Architectural Historian, Alabama Historical Commission, for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Twickenham National Register Historic District.

Since my childhood, Huntsville and especially this neighborhood have always held a special nostalgia for me. Huntsville was a sleepy little place then. But it was always exciting when my mother and grandmother brought me over here with them from our home in Decatur to shop. Crossing the Tennessee River bridge, we motored along narrow old highway 20 to Mooresville. There, we took a sharp left and continued on through other drowsy villages=Belle Mina, Greenbrier, Madison=zigzagging around spreading cotton fields until we finally saw the clock tower of the old Courthouse rising above the trees on the Huntsville square (fig. 1).

Usually we headed out Randolph Street meandering by old houses set back on shady lawns. The whole feel of the place was one of intimacy and contentment, of security and civilized repose. No doubt many of you have similar recollections=if not of old Huntsville, then of somewhere else. Such memories contribute to our sense of identity, locating us in time and space. This is because we are molded not just by gene pools and the faces that surrounded us in early life, but also by the places that envelop us. Subtly they, too, sculpt our values and outlook on life.

We can no longer take for granted such friendly, meaningful environments. The Huntsville of my childhood, with its old churches and graceful antebellum homes, its old mill villages, its courthouse square and Big Spring=all nestled against the green skirts of Monte Sano Mountain=had evolved slowly and pretty much unselfconsciously into the town I knew in the early 1950s.

Huntsville's venerable, inviting neighborhoods were essentially an unanticipated by-product of the town's history. They were so integral a part of everyday life that we took them for granted and assumed they would always be there.

Around 1970, I returned to Huntsville after a long absence from Alabama. I was stunned; the place was booming. But at what a price! Urban renewal had blitzed a great swath of old Huntsville southwest and east of the courthouse square, indiscriminately pulling down whole streets full of houses. I was reminded of bombed-out areas I had seen in some European cities. Abingdon Place has just been leveled for a Boys' Club field; famous Cotton Factors' Row along with the old tree-clad Courthouse were gone (fig. 2). Replacing them was a seeming avalanche of concrete and steel and shiny big windows. It all looked more cosmopolitan more big city. But was it necessarily better? Certainly the friendly human scale was gone.

It also looked as if the Twickenham neighborhood, too, might be on the edge of extinction—doomed to be nibbled from the edges by creeping blight, along with more and more asphalt parking lots. I wondered if the people in Huntsville had prostrated themselves before some kind of golden calf of progress. I thought, "Pretty soon, good old Huntsville is going to look like everywhere else." Well, thankfully I was wrong about Huntsville. What I didn't realize was that a number of Huntsvillians were already concerned about the way things were going and were working to reverse a trend that threatened to erase the personality and appeal of the old part of the city.

We all know the rest of the story. Standing here more than 25 years later, we're surrounded by the magnificent results. Despite some tragic early architectural losses that shouldn't be minimized, good sense prevailed. Thanks to dedicated people like Frances Roberts, Harvie Jones, Catherine Gilliam, and others. Wonderful landmarks like the old depot were saved; and in 1973 the Twickenham neighborhood became one of Alabama's first National Register historic districts. Twickenham is probably one of the most desirable vintage residential districts anywhere in the Southeast.

Twickenham is also one of the few historic residential areas that hasn't lost its friendly link with the old downtown business area. Residential and business streets merge seamlessly and gracefully into one another. You can still take a relaxed stroll from the Square into homey neighborhoods full of pretty homes: no used car lots, no abandoned houses, no littered vacant lots. Once people assumed that you should be able to walk to school or to work or even go home for



**Fig. 2 View of new Huntsville-Madison County Courthouse, under construction.**

Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

lunch. However, the common-sense notion of pedestrian-friendly streets and easy access to schools, stores, offices, and places of worship has gotten lost in the pell-mell sprawl of the automobile-dependent suburbs.

Fortunately, some urban planners are beginning to take an appreciative second look at places like Twickenham and old downtown Huntsville and to learn a few lessons. Here planners find an easy mix of activities that don't force anyone to drive everywhere. Children may be able to walk to school, and you may go home for lunch now and then. Past and present also live comfortably together, adding up to real quality of life.

I'm also fascinated by the sheer architectural diversity all around Huntsville. No other urban landscape in the state offers such a living textbook of American architectural history: delicate Federal-period fanlight doorways, stately Greek Revival porticoes, Romanesque belfries, Gothic spires, fussy Italianate brackets, pointed Queen Anne-style turrets, 1920s "stock-broker Tudor," and finally a smattering of early modern architecture. It's all here—in big houses and little ones, stores and schools, churches. Taken together, the history and architecture of Twickenham and old Huntsville become a fantastic window through which at times we not only can glimpse, but also almost touch the past.

This beautiful, historic, and romantic environment is also fragile. You have done a marvelous job in protecting and enhancing it in the last 25 years, but you cannot afford to rest on your laurels—not now, not ever. Living in a wonderful setting like Huntsville brings with it the responsibility of caring for it. Remain alert. Change is inevitable, but change must be managed intelligently if it is to be in a positive direction and if cherished qualities of "place" and "environment" are not to be gradually destroyed.

In the first place, a neighborhood can only lose so many landmark buildings before it has irreparably lost its historical character. Never forget that nice old buildings are a limited and nonrenewable resource. In 1973, about 50 pre-Civil War buildings still stood in the Twickenham Historic District. Today several are gone. Most were neither large buildings nor major landmarks; nevertheless, they contributed to the ambience of Twickenham. As Harvie Jones once remarked, losing one or two landmarks every few years may not seem like much, but over 20 or 30 years, the numbers mount up especially if you have only 50 to start with. What authentic old buildings we manage to leave for our great great grandchildren to learn from and to love in their turn will depend upon how vigilant we are right now.

Of course landmarks are going to be lost in spite of everything we do. The question then becomes what supplants them. And will the replacement enhance or diminish the overall character of the surrounding area? I can imagine instances when actual reconstruction of a lost landmark might be justified. But in most cases, sensitive and compatible new design may be the preferable course of action.

Likewise, if trees are cut or sidewalks replaced or even if traffic patterns are altered, what may be the long range impact on the “feel” of a neighborhood and its quality of life? We who love mellow towns and neighborhoods like this  $\equiv$ also with our planners and our civic leaders $\equiv$ need to cultivate the mindset of the chess player instead of the poker player. We have to anticipate long range consequences and not be deluded by short term gain. We must remain organized, vigilant, involved, informed, far-seeing, and, yes, reasonable.

We can take heart from what John Kenneth Galbraith has observed: “Preservationists are the only people history invariable proves right.” It does seem true that preservationists often perceive both future benefits and pitfalls more accurately than do those enthusiastic town boosters who focus only upon the short term reward. The more informed the public is about the positive facts, the virtues of historic preservation, its capacity to enrich lives in so many ways, the more allies preservationists have. Preservation does not have to compete with progress; preservation **is** progress. Some one once put it very well: “Preservation is not blind opposition to progress, but rather opposition to blind progress!”

We who believe in the long term public and civic benefit of safeguarding areas like Twickenham or, for that matter, open spaces or natural areas or Civil War battlefields, must educate, educate, educate: our children, our neighbors, the business community, land developers, legislators, and ourselves. Teaching our fellow citizens and the decision makers in our communities to see with new eyes is the foundation of our educational task if the places we love, not just our old downtown neighborhoods and streetscapes, but also our beautiful rural landscapes, are to survive.

A critical mass of citizens must become aware of what is special about the places we revere: their history, their architecture, their culture, and their natural beauty. A wholesome, informed pride of place can be a very effective instrument, indeed, both to safeguard and to enhance our vintage neighborhoods. And those who care need to know about and be able to use the legal and planning tools we have to direct change beneficially while retaining a community’s sense of its specialness $\equiv$ past *with* present.

At the same time, we preservationists must keep our perspective. We cannot lose sight of the big picture. Thankfully we've moved beyond the time when historic preservation was seen largely as the attempt of eccentrics to save a few *historical shrines*. I'm troubled when too many erstwhile local preservationists will get involved only when there's an immediate threat to their own bailiwick and simply bow out when the struggle moves elsewhere or when larger but equally important issues such as overall government preservation policies are at stake.

Every human is entitled to at least the choice for a decent, wholesome environment, whether one happens to live in a working class neighborhood or on "Silk Stocking Row," in an urban setting, or in rural America. A vibrant and rejuvenated old mill village where people feel good about their surroundings and hence better about themselves should be a cause of rejoicing for all of us.

We cannot afford to retreat into privileged residential enclaves and divorce ourselves from the larger issues of community betterment. Wise and positive manipulation of the *built* environment is critical—both those beautiful built environments like Twickenham that we've inherited as well as those we ourselves would create. It is critical if we humans are to maintain a civilized quality of life, one that nourishes rather than impoverishes the human spirit.

We begin the task right here, with people like you, and in beautiful of towns and neighborhoods like this. You've done wonderfully here in Huntsville so far. Your accomplishments of the last two decades inspire me.

With the privilege of living in this beautiful setting, in this beautiful old town, comes the responsibility to understand it and thus to maintain it, so that those who come after us may also learn from such a place, and to love it in their own turn. That is your task, your charge as you look toward the next 25 years.

*Bob Gamble, Senior Architectural Historian for the Alabama Historical Commission, is the author of two major works on the state's architecture: The Alabama Catalog and Historic Architecture in Alabama (for complete citations, see page 17).*

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Printing

**The Tennessee Valley Press, Inc.**

Graphic Design

Frances Osborn Robb & Margaret J. Vann

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