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Significant Sites and Structures: What Qualifies?*

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From the Editor

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From the Editor

My heartfelt thanks to all of you who have encouraged and complimented me on the Summer 1998 issue of *Quarterly*. I offer special thanks to the Publications Committee who are making my job a pleasure. Special thanks to Frances Robb who is still willing to hold my hand as I learn Pagemaker. As I am still learning, any and all help is gratefully accepted.

From the purpose of Historic Huntsville Foundation: "The Historic Huntsville Foundation was established in 1974 to encourage the preservation of historically or architecturally significant sites and structures throughout Huntsville and Madison County and to increase public awareness of their value to the community."

This issue will be a little different: the charge to the editor is to feature, at least, one significant historic structure or site in each *Quarterly*. So I decided to find out what makes a structure or site historic. Is it because someone famous lived there (Washington's Mount Vernon); is it because something famous happened there (Kitty Hawk, North Carolina); or is it historic because of its place in history (Huntsville's mill villages)?

And the answer is yes. All of the above. In one of my past incarnations, I was a high school English teacher; I was fond of sending my students to the dictionary to "look it up." Well, I have followed my advice, and I offer you *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th Edition, definitions: *historic*: a. famous or important in history b. having great and lasting importance c. known or established in the past d. dating from or preserved from a past time or culture; *historical*: 1.a. of, relating to, or having the character of history b. based on history c. used in the past and reproduced in historical presentation 2. famous in history; *significant*: 1. having meaning; *esp.*: SUGGESTIVE 2.a. having or likely to have influence or effect: IMPORTANT. In addition, Historic Huntsville Foundation defines a building as historic if it is 40 or more years old. Well, that means the 1950s ranch house I live in is historic and wor-

thy of preservation. (In fact, I'm coming to appreciate its street appearance and plan to preserve that 1950s look. Inside is still up for grabs.) Structures and sites are significant as they are important or give meaning to our lives. So the Big Spring is a significant historical site because Twickenham (later known as Huntsville) grew up around it. The Madison County Health Department is a significant historical site because thousands of Huntsvillians received their first doses of Salk vaccine there. You may argue then that any structure or site could be historic, and my answer is, again, yes.

This issue of the *Quarterly* will feature people from different neighborhoods of Huntsville writing about the significant and historic areas they love. Jane Barr, Monte Sano resident and chair of the Historic Huntsville Foundation Preservation Committee, has two articles—one on an 1880s house she restored and another on the 1950s Monte Sano Elementary School. David Bowman, deconstructionist, writer, and editor of the once *Huntsville News*, sends from Arkansas his diary of deconstruction of an 1850s house on the corner of Smith Street and Holmes Avenue. Jack Burwell, Huntsville native and attorney, describes growing up on East Holmes Street in a 1904 bungalow. Bill Easterling, Huntsville author and *Huntsville Times* columnist, writes of growing up in a mill village. Diane Ellis, Executive Director and Historic Huntsville Foundation preservationist, contributes two essays: one on the Dallas Mill water tower and the other on the Madison County Health Department property fronting Eustis Avenue and Green Street. Jerri Hightower, long-time resident of Huntsville, writes on the value of living in her Twickenham neighborhood from her 1919 stucco house on Randolph Avenue. Kent Wilborn, assistant manager of Monte Sano State Park, writes of the restoration of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) buildings in the park. As you will see in this *Quarterly*, the contributors agree it is the people and the memories associated with the structures and sites that make them significant and historic.

This brings me to a request I make to you, the *Quarterly* readers. On page 5 in my *Challenge to the Membership* is a list, submitted by a local architectural firm (your editor made this request of six local firms), of five endangered structures in the Huntsville/Madison County area. The structures or sites don't have to be endangered, but I would like for you also to submit lists of structures or sites you think worthy of preserving. Along with these lists, please give your reasons for preserving these structures or sites and furnish any photographs, drawings, etc. if you have them. In following *Quarterlys*, we will feature a section with your submissions. I also solicit memoirs of neighborhoods and places; these too may develop into articles or sources of articles in future *Quarterlys*. Places live in us because of our memories associated with them.

I look forward to hearing from you and sharing your lists with our readers.

Margaret J. Vann