

# The Historic Huntsville Quarterly

---

Volume 26  
Number 3 *The Hundley Legacy: The  
Architectural and Urban Impact*

---

Article 5

9-22-2000

## The Hundley House

Patricia H. Ryan

Follow this and additional works at: <https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly>



Part of the [Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons](#), and the [History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Ryan, Patricia H. (2000) "The Hundley House," *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*. Vol. 26: No. 3, Article 5.  
Available at: <https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly/vol26/iss3/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Historic Huntsville Quarterly by an authorized editor of LOUIS.

# The Hundley House

*Patricia H. Ryan*

The Oscar Hundley House at 401 Madison Street is a mixture of architectural styles—not uncommon for domestic architecture at the turn of the last century.

The massing is typical of Queen Anne styling while the trim and gambrel gables are representative of the Dutch Colonial Revival style. The two-story frame home, while basically rectangular in shape, includes a round, one-story bay on the facade and an angular bay on each side.

The foundation and the front bay are rock-faced, random limestone ashlar, which was painted red in the 1960s. The first floor is clapboard; the second is covered with square-cut shingles associated with the Shingle style. The roof is covered with stamped, galvanized metal shingles installed in 1980 with the encouragement of the Historic Huntsville Foundation and funds from an Alabama Historical Commission grant.



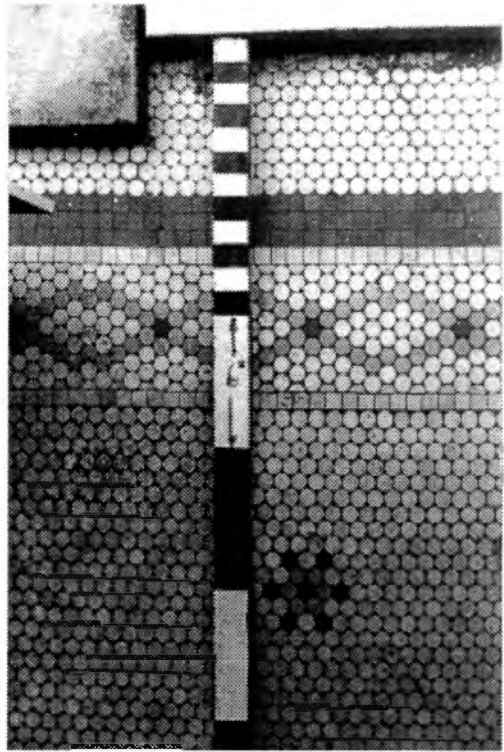
*Oscar Hundley House, circa 1900. Notice Judd Studio mark in lower left corner. Courtesy Huntsville Public Library*

Four simple brick chimneys rise above the peak of the central hipped roof. Most of the exterior detailing is classically inspired and concentrated around the eaves, the porch columns, and the entablature.

The fenestration consists of double hung wood windows with a large single pane in each sash. This includes the large rounded panes found in the two windows in the front bay. The upper-story windows contain upper sashes of leaded, beveled glass. The front entry is recessed from the porch and contains polished stone wainscoting, a tiled floor and a wood door with a single large pane of glass bordered by an applied garland design.

The interior contains stained glass windows, ornately paneled pocket doors, and hardwood parquet floors in various, intricate patterns (Huntsville Planning Dept.). The original walls are plaster on lath in most of the home. The doors throughout are topped with transoms and are framed with heavy classical details. The public rooms on the first floor are arranged in a Shingle style plan and decorated with a combination of Queen Anne and classical detailing in dark wood.

The entry hall contains a large fireplace, dark wood wainscoting, a paneled ceiling, and an open stairway. The stairway includes a newel post that once held an electric light fixture, a full half turn with a



*Detail of the floor of the front porch of the Hundley House. Circular tiles form a border and the field of the porch. The stone in the upper left corner is part of the surrounding edge and base for the stairs down to Madison St. and the columns that support the porch roof. Courtesy Harvie Jones Photo Collection*

landing window seat, and a large stained glass portrayal of a reclining, semi-nude female. A seating area in the round bay contains original plaster trim on the walls and ceiling. The parlor to the left of the entry hall is entered through an opening framed by fluted Ionic columns directly across from a wall filled by another fireplace and two flanking window seats, also framed by Ionic columns.

The dining room, entered through heavy eight foot tall paneled pocket doors, has a beamed ceiling and a fireplace fronted with yellow marble and framed by carved monsters. The overmantle mirrors survive on this and all the major fireplaces. The angled bay on the exterior wall of the dining room contains another, though smaller and more abstract, stained glass window (Huntsville Planning Dept.).

Hundley began thinking about his new home as early as 1890 when he purchased the site at auction for \$2,210. He also bought a small tract along Gates in 1898 (*Huntsville Weekly Democrat* 3). The southern portion of the lot was purchased in 1900 and included the Davis House, which was razed and added to the grounds (Madison County Deed Books VVV, 84, 86).

Whether Hundley employed an architect is not known, although there was at least one in Huntsville with the skill to plan such an impressive home. Likewise, the contractor is unknown, but Hundley's father Orville, a successful builder and capitalist, is a possibility. The elder Hundley built the Huntsville Cotton Mill situated near the Memphis and Charleston Depot, the combination City Hall and Opera House, his own imposing Queen Anne home on Jefferson Street, and the Randolph Street Church of Christ (Huntsville Planning Dept.).

Construction began in the fall of 1899 with Hummel & Son doing the stone work (*Weekly Mercury* 2). By June 1900, the house was completed. The editors of the *Huntsville Weekly Democrat*, Virginia and Susanna Clay, ebulliently described it as follows:

On Thursday afternoon, the elegant new home of Mr. and Mrs. O.R. Hundley on Madison St. was thrown open for the first time to the Ladies Afternoon Euchre Club. The home is perfect in its appointments, and the refined and artistic is depicted everywhere, from the rich tints of the walls, delicate carving of the wood-

work, handsome stained glass window, with its figure of fascinating Circe, to the massive furniture and dainty bric-a-brac. The stairway was a mass of ferns and palms, through whose greenery Circe peeped. Flowers in vases and florals were everywhere, and smilax entwined the pillars of the mantles, doorway, and hall. Electric lights in tinted globes made the scene a brilliant one. (Clay 3)

The *Republican* noted that the home had “the most expensive and beautiful bathroom fixtures ever put in the city” (3).

The Hundley’s occupancy was short-lived. For political reasons Mr. Hundley moved to Birmingham in 1909 and sold the house to Martin May for \$11,000. Mr. May, co-owner of May & Cooney’s Dry Goods Store on East Side Square, sold the house in 1930 to Laughlin & Co. for conversion to a funeral parlor (Deed Book 105, 139). The home was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

*Patricia Ryan is the Editor of Cease Not to Think of Me, The Steele Family Letters, author of Northern Dollars for Huntsville Spindles, and the pictorial researcher for Historic Huntsville, A City of New Beginnings. Ryan wishes to thank Linda Allen for her assistance.*

### Works Cited

Clay, Virginia and Susanna Clay. Editorial. *Huntsville Weekly Democrat*. 6 June 1900: 3.

Huntsville Planning Department. Records Department.

*Huntsville Weekly Democrat*. 16 May 1900, 3.

Madison County Probate Records. *Deed Book*. Multi-volumes VVV:299, 84:71, 86:138, 105:600, 139:42.

*Republican*. 30 June 1900: 3.

*Weekly Mercury*. 20 September 1899: 2.