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Community of Neighbors*

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From the Editor

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From the Editor

A neighborhood is rarely defined as strictly and rigidly as a historical district. Neighborhoods grow and change over time, both physically through architecture and emotionally through the people who live there. The designation of an area as a historic district is one way to help preserve the architectural story of a neighborhood's growth and change. But how do we preserve the feeling of a neighborhood?

Architects of the last few decades have tried to analyze the ideal neighborhood of their youth and find the elements that a newly designed neighborhood should incorporate. Seaside, Florida and local Hampton Cove are examples of these planned communities. The ideal neighborhood contains a public plaza or square, stores within walking distance, homes with front porches, an emphasis on pedestrian traffic, and an architectural style which combines many historic details on individual homes to create a cohesive neighborhood. Other planners mimic growth over time by making every fifth house a "Victorian," or adding looping streets that break the grid associated with planned communities.

In researching and interviewing residents of the Five Points Historic District and surrounding neighborhood, the element that stood out was not a single architectural cohesion. It was a sense of history, growth, and a true concern of the neighbors for their homes and each other. Five Points encompasses architecture from the early 1900s to the present. It is cohesive in its sense of place more than its looks. And it tells a story.

The stories are an important element that architects cannot find when analyzing plans, structures, and details. The job of a publication like the *Quarterly* is to record the intangible elements—the history part of historic preservation—and show how the architectural artifacts trigger or contain these very human and emotional elements.

The interviews with residents past and present are amazingly vivid. Particular homes have a well-known story that is still told today, long after the structure is gone. Other stories trace the use, abuse, and reuse



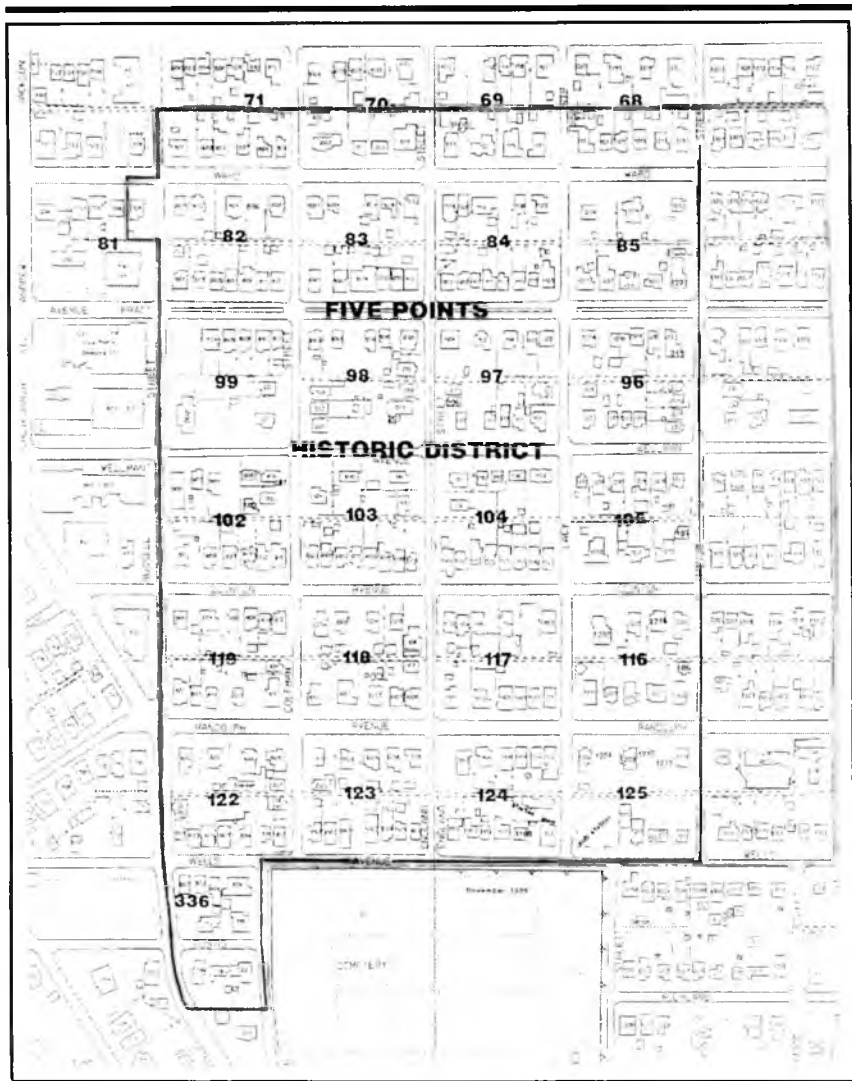
***Home**—Mother and son sitting on the back porch steps. Courtesy Willard Young and Susan Bridges.*

of a home. Series of photographs of families and their homes show the changes to the structure that paralleled changes in the family situation—sometimes more clearly than the owners and neighbors wished.

The neighborhood of Five Points illustrates the changes and growth of residential architecture. For this reason it was designated a Historic District. What cannot be designated or defined is the continuing sense of history that the community of neighbors inhabits, lives, and builds. It is hoped that the following information, photos, and stories will inspire you to visit the Five Points Historic District to understand how it fits into the larger community of Huntsville, but perhaps it will show you the connection between architecture and people on the scale of neighborhood.

—Heather A. Cross

Editorial Note: The format for documentation and citation in this issue follows the most recent updates of the Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Any publishing issues follow The Chicago Manual of Style.



Five Points Historic District, 1999—Although the Five Points Historic District does not cover all of the area known as Five Points, nor the entire East Huntsville Addition, it does encompass prime examples of vernacular domestic architecture from the late 1890s through the 21st century. Houses in the area identified as historic structures are marked with signs denoting the name and date of the structure. Courtesy Susan Bridges.