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From the Executive Director

Lynne B. Lowery

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From the Executive Director

In December, the Historic Huntsville Foundation kicked off a capital campaign that has national significance. Late last year, the Foundation was notified that Harrison Brothers Hardware had been selected by the U.S. Department of the Interior as a *Save America's Treasures* honoree. This program, a pet project of First Lady Laura Bush, is designed to foster pride in America's heritage, to educate Americans on preservation problems facing the buildings, sites, and monuments that represent America's diverse cultural legacy, and to raise concern for the urgent preservation needs of this country's historic and cultural treasures. The store joins other *Save America's Treasures*' designees in the state —the Saturn V rocket at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, and in Birmingham, *Vulcan* and the *Sixteenth Street Baptist Church*—and elsewhere across the country such as Frank Lloyd Wright's *Falling Water* in Pennsylvania and *Taliesin* in Wisconsin, the *Breakers* in Rhode Island, *Middleton Place* in Charleston, South Carolina, and the *Hermitage* in Tennessee.

With this designation came the opportunity to qualify for a \$100,000 federal matching grant. The operative word here is "matching." The Foundation must raise \$100,000 to receive the \$100,000 in federal money. A lesser amount won't do—we must match the entire sum or we will receive no federal funding. Furthermore, because the lowest bid for the preservation work was \$275,000, we must exceed the matching requirement of \$100,000 and raise an additional \$75,000 for a total fundraising goal of \$175,000.

Why was Harrison Brothers selected? This mercantile establishment has survived for more than one hundred years virtually intact. The stock has changed to a great degree, although the Foundation has strived to keep the appearance and feel of the east side (the hardware side) as close as possible to the way the Harrisons left it. But the building, fixtures, and furniture are original. In addition, the Foundation has demonstrated its commitment to the preservation of this national asset for almost twenty years. The designation demonstrates both the store's national significance and the belief that the Foundation will continue to exercise careful stewardship for many years to come.

If the Foundation is successful in raising the matching funds, how will they be spent? The Foundation has done very little to the building since assuming ownership in 1983. An air conditioner was installed on the first floor. Interior storm windows were added. There were minor electrical system repairs and the addition of electrical outlets. The roof was replaced, and the rope-operated elevator was repaired.

Because of the national designation, good stewardship requires that certain issues be addressed. Harrison Brothers has no fire suppression system. Plans call for the installation of a dry-pipe sprinkler system throughout the building. The mercantile store rests on a dirt foundation. A concrete base would provide a firm foundation and protection from termites. The addition of wider, safer stairs at the back of the building from the basement to the second floor would mitigate a safety hazard and provide greater access to the Foundation's warehouse and upper-floor storage space. There is only one extremely small bathroom. It does not meet building codes and has a sewer problem, so its use is discouraged. A handicap-accessible bathroom would provide for our staff, volunteers, and the public.

The addition of heating, air conditioning, and lighting on the second floor would allow for much-needed office space. Exterior and interior maintenance — repointing brick, glazing windows, stabilizing wood floors, and repairing plaster—are needed to properly preserve the structure.

When the Foundation contacts you, please consider a generous gift for the preservation and maintenance of Harrison Brothers Hardware. And remember the store when you plan your shopping trips! Store manager Raquel Tejan and her staff of friendly, helpful volunteers will be happy to help you. You will be delighted with the imaginative selection, and you will be helping to save one of America's treasures.

Lynne B. Lowery