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From the Executive Director

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LYNNE BERRY LOWERY

The most exciting things occur when you get a group of like-minded people together, build a working relationship based on common goals, and then ask for their ideas. It was such a pleasure for me to watch this happen with Historic Huntsville Foundation's Preservation Committee.

This group is chaired by Mike Holbrook, who also serves as vice-chair of the Foundation. Its members are Debra Brasher, Donna Castellano, Cliff Critelli, Rusty George, Marc Goldmon, Alice Lawler, Wayne Lumpkin, Michelle McMullen, David Nuttall and Deen Rice.

The committee's charge is to maintain a prioritized list of endangered properties in Huntsville and Madison County and work for their preservation. In addition, committee members are to coordinate preservation activities with other historic preservation organizations. Until this fall, that is exactly what they did. Reports were made on the status of the Freight Depot, the McCormick House, the Clemens House, and so on. Plans of action were created, assignments were made.

Until one day when everyone seemed to lift their eyes from the trees, take a step back, and really consider the forest—the overriding reasons why we were all there:

What is historic preservation and why is it important? How is it practiced in our community? Where are the gaps in knowledge and understanding?

None were naïve enough to believe that they could make preservationists of everyone they met. But they were optimistic and passionate enough to believe that they could and should pull the words out of their hearts to try to explain why historic preservation makes our community a better place to live, work and play—and to then lay out, in layman's terms, the way it works in our community.

All had experienced the frustration attendant with a lack of knowledge. They recog-

nized the confusion that exists in the minds of most historic district residents—what are all these organizations? Historic Huntsville, the Historic Preservation Commission, Twickenham, Old Town, Five Points. Which one has the power to tell me what I can and cannot do with my property, and what ARE the rules exactly?

The preservation committee is determined to see a copy of this primer, in its current format or another, in the hands of every single resident of our historic districts. Committee members' sincere hope is that they have logically and understandably described why historic districts are special and how to keep them that way. I hope you enjoy and benefit from the fruit of their considerable labor.