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## From the Beginning

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## From the Beginning

Less than a year after the Historic Huntsville Foundation was created in April 1974 the first *Historic Huntsville Quarterly* was published in early 1975. The ten-page publication was edited by Claire Johnston and printed free of charge by Kent Lee Holloway and the Credit Bureau of Huntsville. Lynwood Smith was the Foundation's first chairman.

From the beginning, the *Quarterly* was speaking up for the preservation of Huntsville's remaining historic architecture. Front page headlines of that first issue were "HHF Resolution Ignored by Chamber," and "Weeden Home Restoration Shaping Up." According to the first article the board of directors of the Huntsville Chamber of Commerce had approved "a controversial Plan for the Improvement of Downtown Huntsville, Alabama." The plan, drawn up by architect Edward Arnold for the chamber's Downtown Improvement Committee, was critical of the historic restoration movement downtown. It stated that downtown Huntsville

should communicate solidarity as a vigorous financial center, government seat, and major shopping district. The quaint, remodeled village square does not answer this set of criteria. We need high quality contemporary buildings.

It claimed that the majority of redevelopment to date had "consisted of the historic restoration of facades of existing buildings," and stated "as works of architecture, the old facades along downtown streets are neither historically significant nor of high architectural quality."

According to the article, Harvie Jones had presented his critique of the plan to HHF board members with a "point-by-point evaluation of erroneous data and conclusions." The Foundation board passed a resolution asking the chamber to not forward Arnold's document to the Huntsville City Council but send it back for further consideration, pointing out that the "so-called plan was not really a plan but rather an expression of sentiment." Jones' critique was appended to the Foundation's

resolution, which was “hand-carried to the chamber’s executive vice-president.” However, when the plan was brought before the full chamber at its November 1974 meeting, the Foundation’s resolution was not included. According to the *Quarterly* article, “the chamber’s board subsequently approved the plan and sent it on to the city council. Nothing has been heard of it since.”

From 1976-78 Henry Marks served as editor of the *Quarterly*, followed by Linda Bayer [Allen]. It was during her tenure that the name was changed to *Historic Huntsville Quarterly of Local Architecture and Preservation* and the journal assumed a more scholarly character and sophisticated format. By the summer of 1980 Lynn Jones was appointed associate editor. Mickey Maroney assumed editorship with the Fall/Winter 1983/1984 issue, serving admirably through the Summer 1989 issue. All these editors volunteered their time and produced many wonderful issues, doing research, writing, editing, and what was once laborious layout all by themselves. Also, as the *Quarterly* moved from its original ten stapled pages to a book format with many more pages and photographs, printing services were no longer donated, adding to the cost of publication.

After Maroney, when no volunteer could be found to carry on such an enormous task, the Foundation was, for the first time, forced to pay for editing. Elise Stephens was the first paid editor, followed by Margaret Vann, Heather Cross, and others. During this time several of us served on an editorial oversight committee, helping to find writers, choose topics, and taking on more and more actual writing tasks. In 2002, after having several guest editors, the Foundation was not able to find a suitable editor who would take the job for the amount it was able to pay. The editorial oversight committee was also becoming more and more dissatisfied with the printing quality, particularly the photographic reproductions.

It was then that Diane Ellis, Pat Ryan, and I volunteered to be the editors without pay on the condition that the board of directors investigate the possibility of paying for a professional layout and redesign of the *Quarterly*. Bruce Hiles of Designwise made a presentation to the board and was subsequently hired. We have been more

than pleased with the new design and the care Bruce has taken to do a good job of layout. White Tiger has been doing the printing, and we have been happy with them as well. Linda Allen joined us in the writing/editing process several years ago, and has been a tremendous help.

The editorship is a big job, requiring knowledge of architecture, local history, photography, and of course the ability to write well and search out other good writers. The editors have thoroughly enjoyed the work, which has taken us in many interesting and often unexpected directions. We have learned a lot. But, we feel it is time for us to rest and time for someone else (or several someones) to bring new blood and new ideas to the *Quarterly*. It is our hope that the tradition of a scholarly publication will be continued as one of the main benefits of membership in the Foundation.

LYNN JONES