

April 14, 1993

Mr. Donald Scott Huber
708 Cleermont Drive
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Re: 710 Holmes Avenue (c.1890 Victorian house, Old Town Historic Preservation District

Dear Scott:

Attached as a donation to the restoration of your c.1890 Victorian house at 710 Holmes Avenue is a restored view showing the original 3-sided and smaller Victorian verandah, based on the house plan shown on the 1913 Sanborn Map (attached).

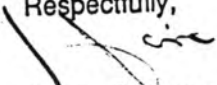
If you want to restore the original verandah I will also donate to you detailing of the verandah in order to help in the preservation of this historic century-old house.

This was and can be again as attractive a Victorian house as any one on East Holmes, as the drawing shows. There is no "artistic license" involved because the drawing is traced over the photograph, so this is a true depiction of what the house would look like with its original Victorian configuration verandah.

If the house is not large enough to suit, I'm sure the Historic Commission would approve a harmonious addition to the rear, as it has done on dozens of other houses.

You did an excellent job in restoring the 1896 Bost House on East Clinton. We look forward to you continuing that work to help preserve Huntsville's genuine historic architecture.

Respectfully,


Harvie P. Jones, FAIA
HPJ/tt

cc: President Chuck Saunders
President Pro-Tem Richard Showers Sr.
Dr. Jimmy Wall, Jr.
Bill Kling Jr.
Jim Putnam
Will Lewis, HHPC Chairman
HJ
Mayor Hettinger

Couple's push to remove church goes sour again

c. 1890 house

Old Town opposes demolition plan

By PAIGE OLIVER
Times Staff Writer

A Huntsville couple lost their second attempt Tuesday night to remove an Old Town District church they want to replace with a Victorian replica home.

Old Town residents opposed to the Scot and Cheryl Huber's plans told Huntsville City Council members that demolishing the building might set off a precedent that could mean the demise of historic neighborhoods in Huntsville.

The Hubers, 708 Cleermont Drive, failed to convince council members that the building that now houses Twickenham Baptist Church at 710 Holmes Ave. is too "dilapidated" to renovate.

The couple, who are negotiating to buy the property and the two vacant lots next to it from the church for an undisclosed price, said they now will take their case to Madison County Circuit Court.

State law provides individuals who have been denied historic preservation or architectural applications an opportunity to appeal the decision in court within 60 days.

The Huntsville Historic Preservation Commission in early March denied an application from the Hubers to tear down or move the cottage-style building, believed to have been constructed sometime around 1910.

"They're not really interested in preserving the structure," Huber said of the commission's decision. "They just want me to leave it there."

In a letter dated March 11, the commission denied the Hubers' request because "the subject property can be renovated for less than it would cost to build a new replica, (and) that property is worth preserving."

Dennis O'Dell, the Hubers' attorney,

■ City Council delays vote on cutting budget. Page B4.

■ Attorney general's advice sought on city's control of pesticides. Page B4.

argued the commission was not formed to consider cost questions, and noted that the Hubers offered to "preserve" the building by moving it to a lot they own on O'Shaughnessy Avenue.

A contractor who said he has renovated about 20 homes in Huntsville, Huber said he has called in three other contractors to determine whether the building is worth restoring. Huber said they found the building's foundation and interior to be "in very poor condition."

By the time restorations are complete, "there's not really anything left," said Mrs. Huber. "It has nothing to do with our willingness or unwillingness to preserve the Old Town District."

Renovations would run at least \$10,000 "to bring it up to neighborhood standards," Huber said. And even if the couple spent \$80,000 to refurbish the building, "it will always have some kind of structural problems."

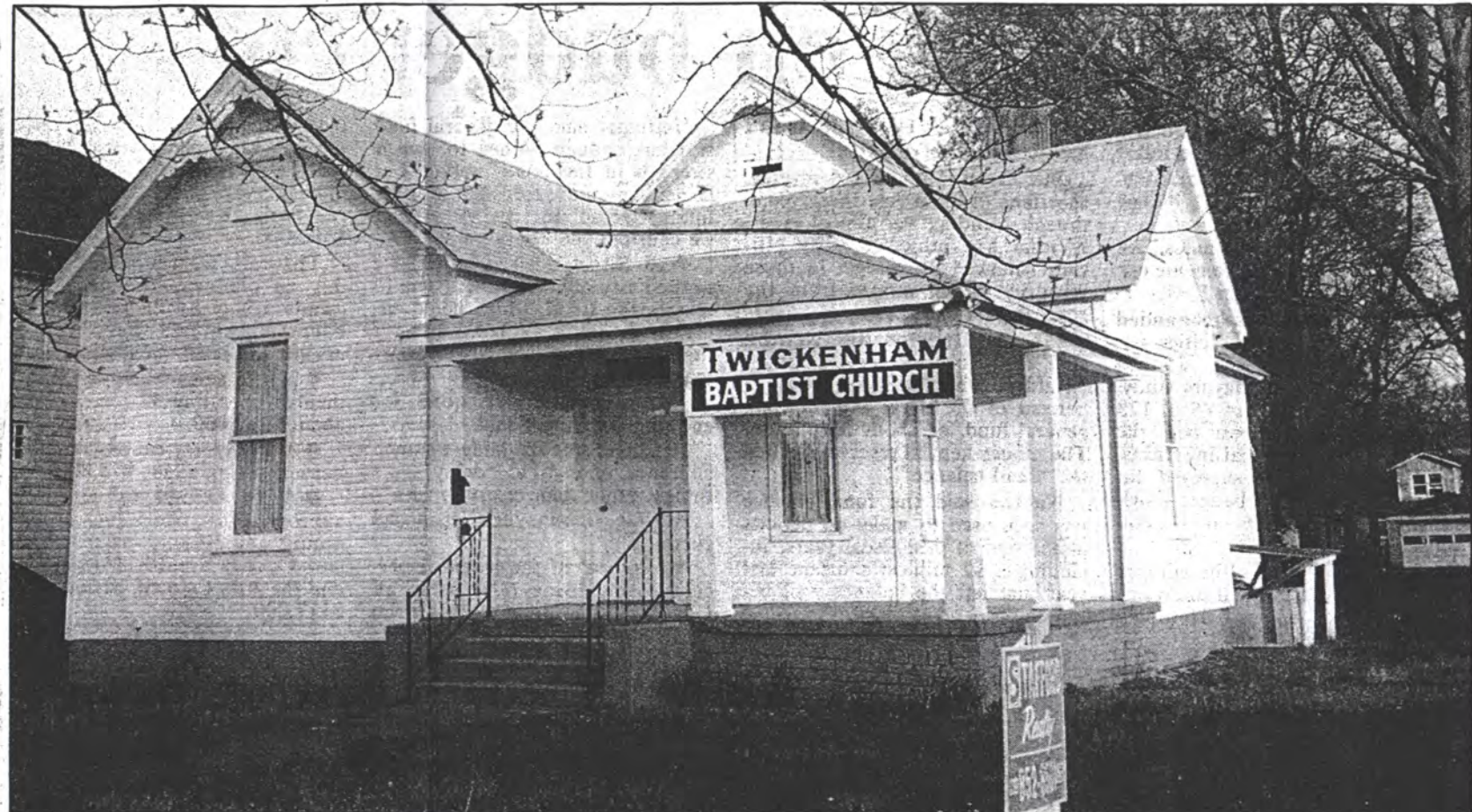
Councilman Jimmy Wall said the commission was created in 1972 by the wishes of residents in Old Town and Twickenham. "This isn't something the commission wants to regulate," he said. "It's something the residents want regulated."

About 350 buildings are in the Old Town and Twickenham historic districts.

But O'Dell questioned the consistency of decisions made by the commission, which has allowed residents of 13 homes to add vinyl siding, while several other residents added solar panels he said "are visible from the street."

The commission also allowed the demolition of a house on Steele Street last year, but members said that home was in

See CHURCH, page B3



Some Holmes Avenue residents defend couple's request to tear down this old church.

Church

Continued from page B1

far worse shape than the building at 710 Holmes Ave.

Still, some Holmes Avenue residents said renovating the church building is a lost cause, too, and they welcome the Hubers' proposed replica, saying it could have boost property values even further in the area.

Jay Lockridge, who lives next door to the church in a home constructed in the early 1900s, said he

appreciates what the historic commission was founded to do, but said cost estimates on renovations are rarely close.

"The problem you run into is the unknown. Until you get into (the renovations), you don't know what you could run into," he said. "We feel like (the replica) would be an asset to the neighborhood."

The Hubers said they wanted to buy just the two vacant lots, but church officials reportedly won't sell the adjoining lots without the 710 Holmes Ave. property.

The design of the replica, a two-story Victorian house from the

1880s, was featured in the February 1993 edition of *Southern Living* magazine.

That article praised the replica's design, noting the difficulty visitors have in distinguishing it from the restored houses that line the historic district streets where it sits in Washington, D.C.

O'Dell, reading from the February edition, said, "Even two architects who were doing research for a new community thought this was a house from the 1880s."

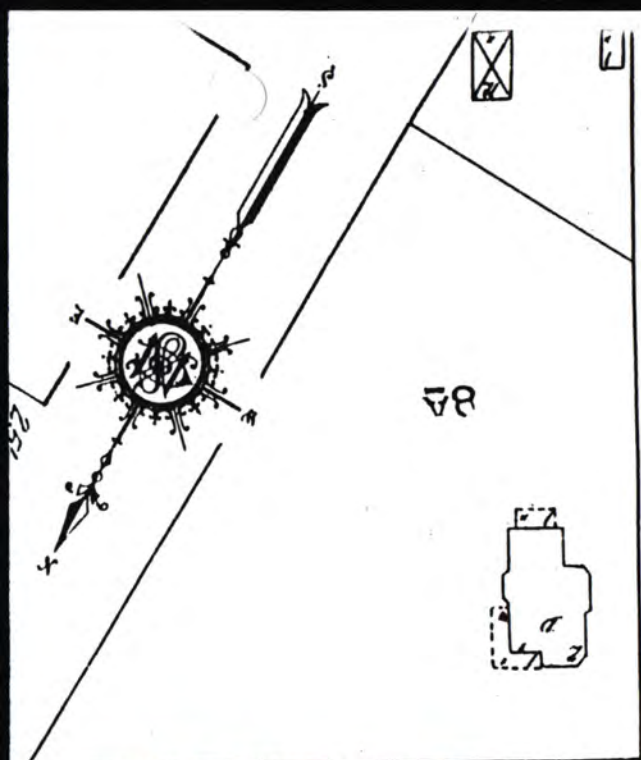
"I don't think that you'll find that the (replica) structure will not fit into the Old Town District,"

O'Dell told the council.

But the replica's ability to "fit in" isn't the point, said several Old Town residents who said removing the existing building will lower property values and will give others a precedent to tear down other historic homes.

"I think this couple has the wrong idea about our neighborhood," said one Old Town resident. "You can build a Victorian replica anywhere, but once you knock down a (historic home), it's gone forever."

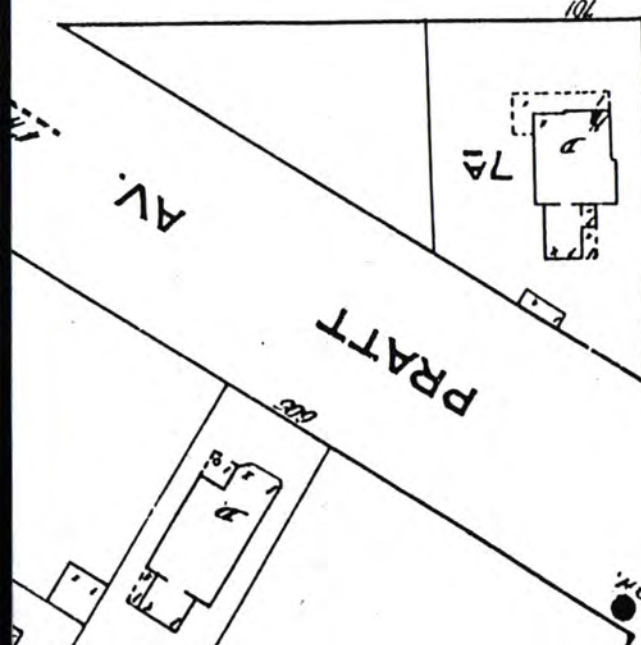
P.S. - Huber did a poor to mediocre job of renovation



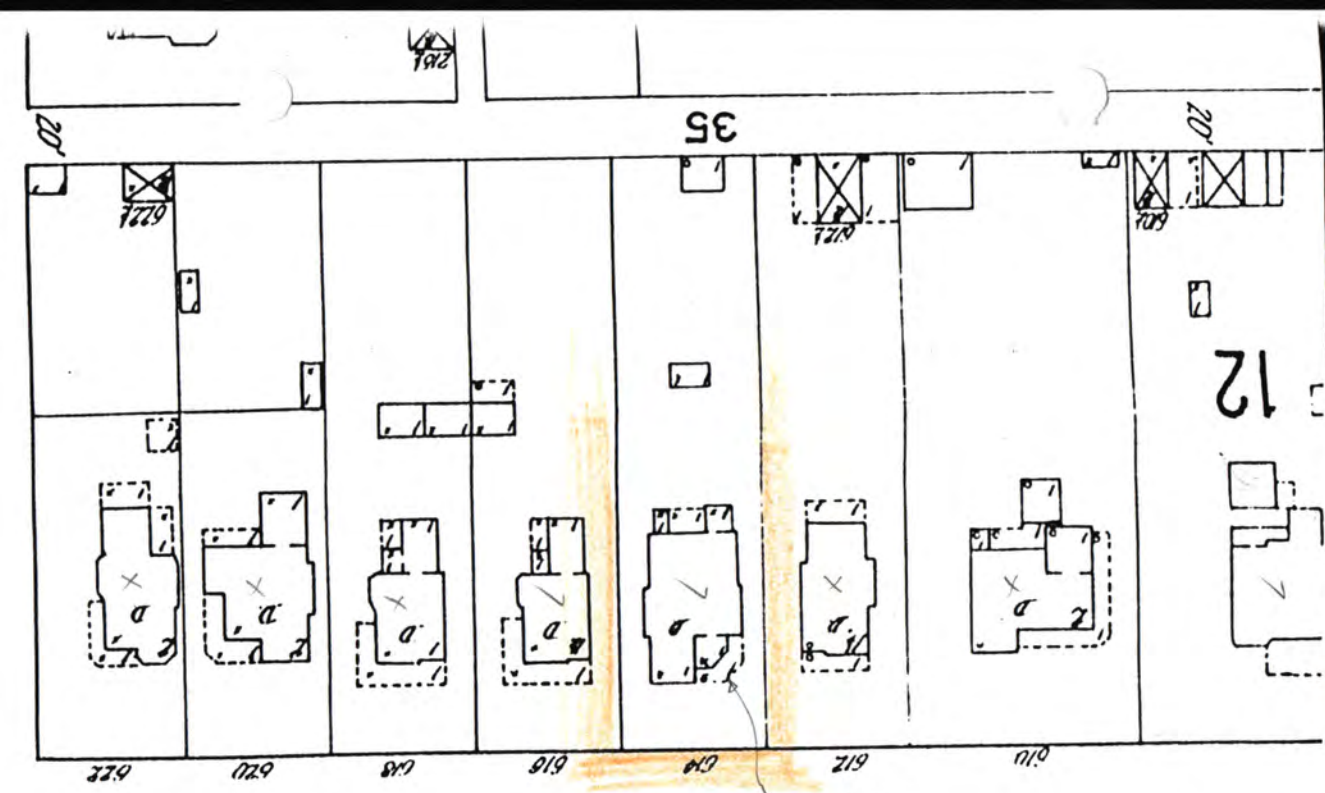
1913 Sanborn Map
of Huntsville, Al.



6" W. PIPE

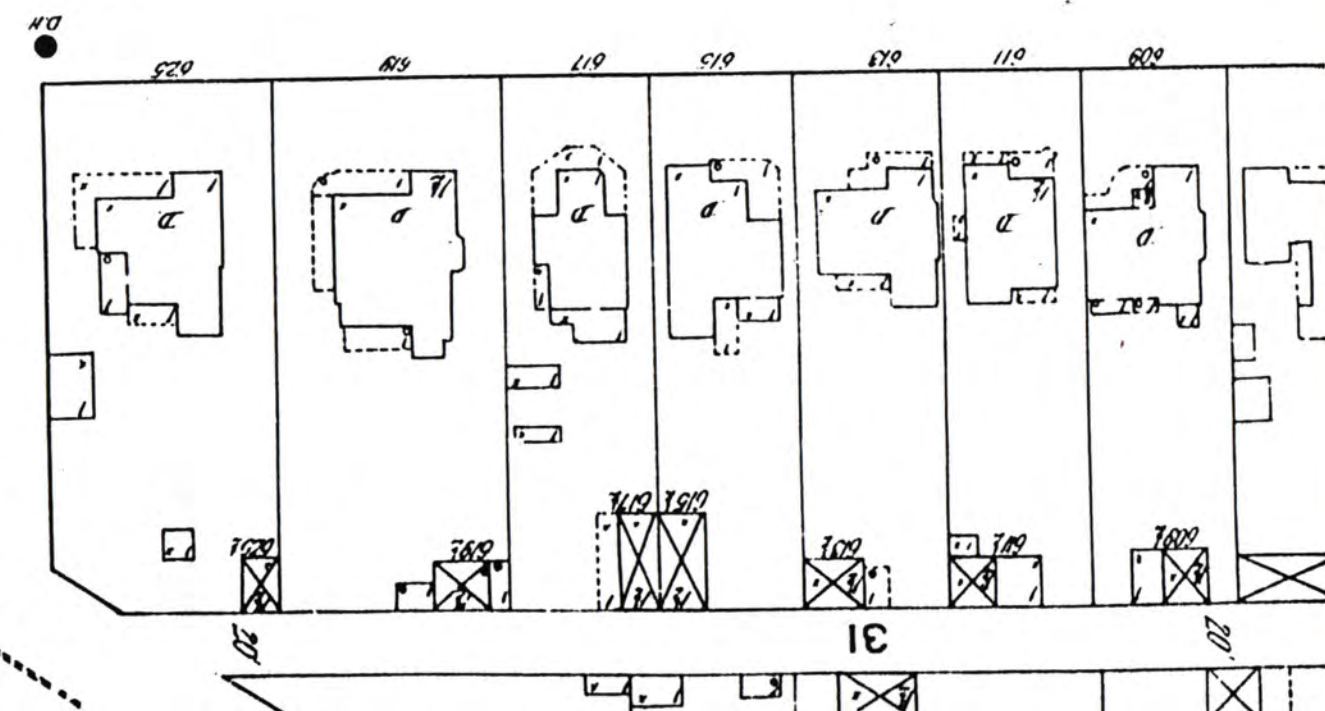


AV.



E. HOLMES

Note original
verandah



WA



P5 - porch removed
in 194 by Scott Humber
(had requested demolition to
build a new "vic" here in
place of this front one.
Done by HHP)

WA



710 HOLMES
AVE. VIC.

c. 1890 (?)
710 Holmes Ave NE,
Huntsville, AL.
photos April '93
HR Jones, FSA
Shows on 1913
Samborn map
w/ 3-sided veranda
(shallower)
This porch probably
1920's

WA





RESTORED VIEW, TRACED OVER 1993 PHOTO
CIRCA 1890 VICTORIAN HOUSE
AT 710 HOLMES AVE.
HUNTSVILLE, AL.
(RESTORED ORIGINAL 3-SIDED VERANDA
FOR THE 1913 SANBORN MAP)
12 APRIL '93 HARVIE P. JONES, F.A.I.A.