

## So how did HSF begin?

Citizens concerned about planned urban renewal through demolition met on October 14, 1970, at Columbia Gas Company to discuss the loss of several buildings contained within Frederick St. to Churchville Ave. between N. Augusta and the Central Ave blocks. Mrs. Gilliam from the Lexington Historic Preservation Society and Calder Loth from the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission took this group under their wings to begin the process to preserve Staunton's buildings.

1971 was a banner year for this young group. On May 6, the charter for Historic Staunton Foundation was approved and on December 5 the first fundraiser began; The Christmas House Tour. The group continued to gain members with Jim Patrick serving as the first president. Members of the Staunton Beautification Commission and members of the Committee to Save the Sears House also became active. In 1972, at a City Council meeting, HSF began its advocacy program by opposing the demolition of the Burns Building, which was located next door to the current HSF offices. HSF lost the battle, but won the war.

In 1973, HSF took on two other battles, the Sears House and the Middlebrook Avenue thoroughfare. A hundred citizens turned out for the City Council meeting to save the Wharf area. City Council listened and allowed the Wharf "an opportunity to prove its economic value to Staunton." This meeting also saw the fight for the possession of the Sears House tabled to another meeting. Later that year, the City refused HSF's request for the Sears House. In 1974, Mayor Frank Pancake, acting on behalf of the City gave the property to Woodward Morris (President of Committee to Save Sears House), who in turn gave it to HSF. Shortly thereafter, T.J. Collins and Son (Doug Roller) and Iona Restoration Associates (Eleanor Patrick & Jim Lamb) began the restoration project.

In the mid-1970's, a University of Virginia student came to Staunton to give a lecture at Mary Baldwin College. In 1977, this student, William T. Frazier, became the first executive director of HSF. The Sears House project was completed and opened that same year as a decorator showcase. The HSF offices were housed at the T.J. Collins and Son Offices for just a short time when Kathleen O'Neill (Frazier) was hired as the first Façade Improvement Coordinator. Kathy's work began in 1978 with Holt's and Beverley Book as two of her first projects. Her work allowed others to see the importance of preservation and soon thereafter, other buildings began improvements and worked to gain designation on the Virginia Landmarks Register.

HSF was quite active in the 1980's: a generous gift allowed HSF to purchase the building at 120 S. Augusta, rehab it and convert it into the current offices; a National Trust for Historic Preservation Honor Award for its pioneering work in revitalizing Staunton's downtown; development of the Staunton Guided Walking Tour Brochure, by Liz McCue and her work on "Staunton, Virginia: A Pictorial History"; the designation of five historic districts in Staunton; and the effort to save another historic structure, the Edmund Cabell log house.

Throughout the 1990's and into the current century HSF continues its work in preservation through technical assistance, education and advocacy. A special thanks to Eleanor and Jim Patrick, G.G. and Frank Pancake, and Delores Lescure, who provided the information for this account of the Foundation's early days.