

## THE HUNDLEY RENTAL HOUSES

41. HUNDLEY-VAN VALKENBURG HOUSE  
108 Gates Street

Richard P. Van Valkenburgh, Avalyn  
Van Valkenburg, and Ann Darby  
P. O. Box 152  
Huntsville, Alabama 35804

Lot 1, Block 60, Old Town  
68' (Gates) X 53'  
16 538090 3842860

1903-1905: Architect/Builder  
unknown

42. HUNDLEY-CLARK HOUSE  
400 Franklin Street

James P. and Cruse P. Clark  
Clark Cruise and Travel  
400 Franklin Street  
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Lot 2, Block 60, Old Town  
55' (Franklin) X 88' (Gates)  
16 538115 3842870

1903-1905: Architect/Builder  
unknown

### DESCRIPTION

108 Gates is a two-story, clapboard house of irregular outline set on a low brick foundation and features multiple roofs, the main one being gable on hip. Two plain chimneys pierce the roof of composition shingles. One gable projects above the chamfered front bay and all the gables are finished with wood shingles. The windows have a single pane in each sash and are edged with plain moldings and a slight cornice. A one-story porch with flat roof extends across the front. The porch elements are identical to those at 400 Franklin as is the front door although it lacks the side and top lights. A one-story shed addition has been added to the rear and a garage adjoins the east side of the house. It is still used as a residence.

400 Franklin is a two-story, detached, frame house of Dutch Colonial inspiration. The second floor is contained by gambrel gables while the south side has a plain gable with slight eave returns. The roof is covered with asbestos shingles. The walls within the upper slope of each gable are wood shingled; the remainder of the house is clapboarded above the low brick foundation. The windows have simple moldings with a thin cornice across the top. The front door is surrounded by top and side lights of diamond shaped panes and a denticulated entablature completes the entrance. A one-story porch with flat roof and plain wood columns extends across the front and is attached to the wall by pilasters. A balustrade encloses the porch. There is a shorter two-story addition to the rear. The first floor houses a travel agency and the second floor is an apartment.

### SIGNIFICANCE

400 Franklin and 108 Gates were built by Oscar Hundley as rental properties behind the large house that he erected for himself in 1900. His own residence, the Oscar Hundley House, is already listed on the National Register. In 1902 he purchased the piece of land (53' X 150') abutting his backyard and the next year tore down the existing stable and a two-story structure which was reputedly built in 1818. The two houses built by Hundley were assessed for taxes in 1905. An electrical

HUNDLEY-VAN VALKENBURG HOUSE and HUNDLEY-CLARK HOUSE  
 108 Gates Street and 400 Franklin Street  
 Huntsville, Alabama

Continuation:

fire damaged 400 Franklin in 1909; the rear addition may have been added at the same time this structure was being repaired. At any rate, the addition and garage were both present by 1928 although the second floor was then an open porch. Hundley sold 400 Franklin in 1912 and 108 Gates in 1918.

Although no architect has been identified for any of Hundley's buildings (including a third rental house he built at 500 Franklin in 1904, located in the Twickenham Historic District), it seems likely that they were designed by the same person. They are all more or less transitional designs combining Victorian massing with Colonial Revival elements. They all have an abundance of shingled gables, similar if not identical porch elements and doors, and the same window frames and chimneys. All were built within the same five year period for the same client. They illustrate the shift in domestic architectural tastes in Huntsville at the turn of the century from a preoccupation with Victorian to the Colonial Revival--a change which occurred much later in Huntsville than in the Northeast. This transition is made apparent by a comparison of these two houses: 108 Gates exhibits the vertical emphasis and massing characteristic of Victorian designs while 400 Franklin was definitely inspired by the Dutch Colonial Revival. The gambrel gables enclose the second story and convey a lower, quieter profile to the basically boxy design. Both of these houses are unaltered and possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and association. They embody the distinctive features of local residential design at the turn of the century--a period when architectural tastes were undergoing a radical transformation.

In addition, these houses are associated with the life of Oscar Hundley, a prominent Alabama lawyer and politician. Oscar was born in 1854, the son of Orville Hundley. Orville was a successful Huntsville contractor who built some of the most distinctive local structures during the second half of the 19th century. Among them were the Huntsville Cotton Mill, the first textile mill in town; the combination City Hall and Opera House, which Hundley owned and developed under the mayor's direction; his own magnificent Queen Anne home; the federal post office and courthouse; and the Randolph Street Church of Christ (item no. 43). Tragically, only the last of these has survived. His son Oscar probably was not a contractor, but he did have several buildings erected for himself. In addition to his own home, he built three rental houses and one commercial structure on South Side Square (item no. 33). All of these are extant.

Oscar Hundley was very active in local and state politics and a most controversial figure. Educated at Phillips Exeter Academy and Vanderbilt University, he began practicing law in Huntsville in 1878. He served as city attorney from 1882 to 1884 during which time he authored the Code of Ordinances of the City of Huntsville, Alabama. For almost

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twenty years he was the division counsel for the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway, while also serving eleven years in both houses of the state legislature. In 1893 President Harrison appointed him a national commissioner to the World's Columbian Exposition. President Roosevelt named him the U. S. district judge for the northern district of Alabama in 1907, which required him to reside in Birmingham. He moved his family there the same year and made that his permanent home, never returning to Huntsville. However, Hundley twice failed to receive Senate confirmation because he had abruptly switched political parties in 1896, thereby alienating the entire Alabama delegation, who consequently refused to support his appointment. In 1909 he was forced to resign as district judge for lack of confirmation, and he resumed private practice.

45. HUNDLEY-CLARK HOUSE  
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Clark Cruise and Travel  
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Lot 2, Block 60, Old Town: 55' (Franklin) X 88' (Gates)  
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1903-05: Architect/Builder unknown

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