

Mrs. S. Henry Edmunds  
1985

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Mrs. S. Henry Edmunds was born in Charleston, SC, Dec. 11, 1916 - daughter of Augustine T. and Harriott Buist Smythe. She graduated from the College of Charleston in 1937 and in 1972 received the first honorary degree presented a woman from the College.

Mrs. Edmunds retired as Director of Historic Charleston Foundation on July 31, 1985, having been involved with its various projects since shortly after its incorporation in 1947. She is chairman of the Drayton Hall Council, a Trustee of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation (Monticello) and a director of Spoleto Festival USA. She is a former member of the President's Advisory Council for Historic Preservation. She is a member of the National Trust, the American Museum Association, the American Association of State and Local History and a member-at-large of the Garden Club of America. Mrs. Edmunds serves on many City commissions and committees.

She is a winner of the Louise DuPont Crowninshield Award, the highest honor of the National Trust, for Historic Charleston Foundation's leadership role in area rehabilitation in America. She is a recipient of the Department of Interior's Conservation Service Award. She has also received recognition from the Association of Charleston Realtors, Historic Savannah Foundation, the Preservation Society of Charleston, the American Institute of Architects and the Rotary Club "Service Above Self" Award in 1985. \*(SEE BELOW)

Mrs. Edmunds has written a number of articles for magazines and professional journals in the field of preservation. She has lectured extensively throughout the country and has taken part in various symposiums on the many aspects of preservation.

Mrs. Edmunds has three daughters, one of whom is a preservation planner, and several grandchildren.

1986 Distinguished Alumni Award - College of Charleston

Member of the Board of Architectural Review, Charleston, SC

1986 - voted a Lifetime member of the Board of Trustees of Historic Charleston Foundation

Historic Preservation and presented the first award to its namesake.

Mrs. Edmunds is a graduate of St. Timothy's School in Maryland and a 1938 graduate of the College of Charleston. In 1972, she received the first honorary degree presented a woman from the College of Charleston. In 1988, Mrs. Edmunds was presented the College of Charleston Founders' Medal "to Frances R. Edmunds who exemplifies the best in human strivings and accomplishments."

Mrs. Edmunds is the daughter of Augustine Thomas Smythe and Harriott Ravenel Buist. She is the widow of S. Henry Edmunds, well known local attorney. Mrs. Edmunds, has three daughters and six grandchildren.

Always modest in putting herself forward, she pressed ever onwards with her work and this eventually brought her real fame and admiration for her skills and warm personality. Hundreds of thousands of people have visited her small studio in Tradd Street over the years where her work has given them a feeling for Charleston that emphasizes its beauty, charm and intimate nature. She accomplished so much that a repetition of it would sound pretentious and dull.

When I think of my Grandmother now she is remarkably still a presence in my life. Perhaps by living so intensely she over-filled her life span and she continues to spill over into the present. So on the occasion of her induction into the South Carolina Hall of Fame I feel that she is very much with us.

In an accompanying ceremony, Mrs. Frances Ravenel Smythe Edmunds, prominent citizen of Charleston, will also be inducted into the S.C. Hall of Fame.

The ceremony, presided over by former Myrtle Beach Mayor and President of the S.C. Hall of Fame, Robert Hirsch, will honor Mrs. Edmunds for her many accomplishments in her leadership of the restoration and rehabilitation of Charleston.

The Honorable, Joseph P. Riley, Mayor of Charleston, will deliver a tribute to Mrs. Edmunds.

Mrs. Edmunds was the founding director of Historic Charleston Foundation and has been associated with the foundation from its inception in 1947 to her retirement as Executive Director in 1985.

As Executive Director of Historic Charleston Foundation, Mrs. Edmunds directed the operations of the Foundation's two house museums, the Nathaniel Russell House and Edmondston-Alston House, its annual tour of private homes and its extensive program of reproductions. She helped expand Charleston's historic preservation district (the first in America) from 144 acres to 789 acres, and led successful efforts to strengthen the city's protective zoning and height ordinances.

Under her direction, the Foundation was actively involved in helping rehabilitate particularly deteriorated neighborhoods with a series of creative programs and subsidies which enable current residents to remain in these neighborhoods as homeowners. The goal was a stable, rehabilitated historic district integrated both racially and economically, with a strong component of present residents.

In 1971, Mrs. Edmunds was the recipient of the Louise duPont Crowninshield Award, the highest award conferred by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The award honored Mrs. Edmunds for "her unflagging devotion to the restoration and revitalization of Charleston, SC.

She has led and sustained a community effort that has resulted in the preservation and continued use of one of the major concentrations of eighteenth and nineteenth century structures in the United States."

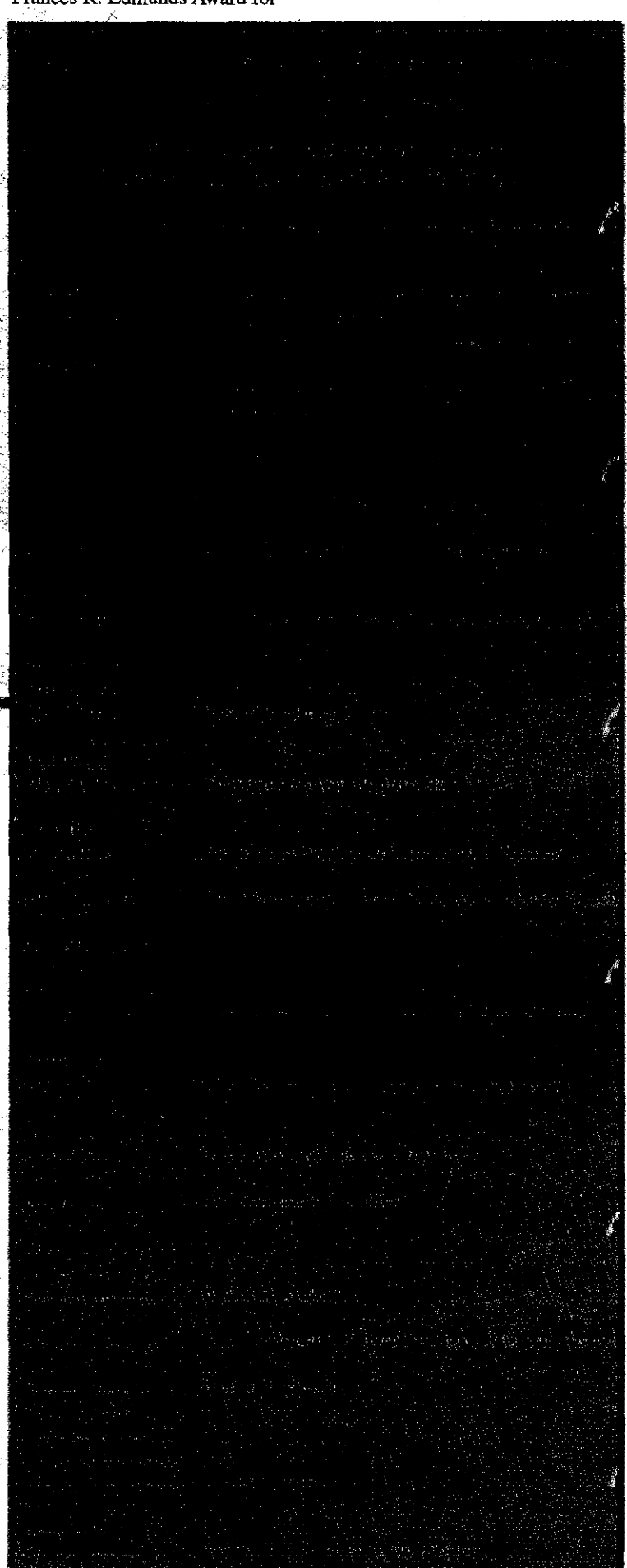
"In the rehabilitation of Ansonborough in Charleston (the first area rehabilitation project in America) through the pioneering use of the revolving fund, Mrs. Edmunds has set an example for other communities to follow in the recovery of inner city districts."

In addition to the Crowninshield Award, Mrs. Edmunds is the 1979 recipient of the Department of Interior's Conservation Service Award, the 1968 recipient of the National Trust for Historic Preservation Citation for Significant Achievement in Historic Preservation in the United States. In 1985, Mrs. Edmunds was awarded The Order of the Palmetto by Governor Richard W. Riley. In 1985, Mayor Joseph P. Riley proclaimed Friday, October 25 as Frances R. Edmunds Day in the City of Charleston, SC in recognition of her many achievements in historic preservation.

In 1977, Mrs. Edmunds was appointed to President Carter's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. She served in this capacity until 1983. Mrs. Edmunds is a past director of the Historic House Association of America and a member at large of the Garden Club of America. She is a founding director of Spoleto

Festival USA and the past chairman of the Drayton Hall Council of the National Trust. She is a past trustee of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Monticello.

In 1986, the Historic Charleston Foundation named its preservation center in her honor. The Frances R. Edmunds Center for Historic Preservation is located at 108 Meeting Street in Charleston. In 1994, the foundation created The Frances R. Edmunds Award for



## Classic Love Story Romeo & Juliet At Koger Center

The greatest love story is coming to Columbia in time for Valentine's Day.

Columbia City Ballet, under the direction of William Starrett, will present the full-length ballet *Romeo & Juliet* at the Koger Center.

Sponsored by Nelson, Mullins, Riley & Scarborough, the production will run for three performances February 13-14, 1998.

The first ballet based on the well-known Shakespeare tragedy was called *Romeo e Giulietta* and

was staged in Venice in 1785, 194 years after the first production of the play. It has inspired many choreographers and composers since. However *Romeo & Juliet* did not take its place in the full-length repertoire until Serge Prokofiev's composition in the early 20th century.

The Kirov Theater in Leningrad

commissioned Prokofiev to write his score in 1935. But, because of the cultural repression in the USSR, the theater administration was prohibited from producing the work

so it premiered in 1938 in Brno, Czechoslovakia. The success of the Czech performances convinced Soviet authorities to endorse a production by the Kirov.

Columbia City Ballet's production also will be danced to the Prokofiev score and choreographed by Greg Easley. A native of Austin, Texas, Easley danced professionally with Ballet Austin

and the Atlanta Ballet and is the former Artistic Director of Austin Contemporary Ballet.

*Romeo & Juliet* has not been performed by the Columbia City Ballet since 1985 when William Starrett and then-Artistic Director Ann Brodie collaborated, creating a production that was filmed by SCETV. Prima Ballerina

Mariclaire Miranda was featured in the title role, a role she will reprise in this production, alternating with Ballerina Patricia Miller.

This is not the first time Miller has portrayed Juliet. In 1984 the Joffrey Ballet presented *Romeo & Juliet*, choreographed by Stuttgart Ballet's John Cranko. Miller, along with her partner James Canfield, premiered the title roles at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. She went on to perform Juliet for audiences at City Center in New York City and Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles, where the Joffrey was resident ballet company.

Miranda and Miller will be partnered by Premier Dancer Serge Layoie and Principal Dancer Julian Harper-Brown, respectively. Other Columbia City Ballet favorites who will perform include Betsey Clark, Victoria Cholka, M. Hong and Tracey Yanickello Bayly.

Three performances are scheduled for Columbia: February 13 at 8 p.m. and February 14, at 3 and 8 p.m. Tickets range in price from \$7.50 to \$26 and are on sale now at the Coliseum box office and all Capital ticket outlets. To charge by phone call 251-2222. For season membership tickets, call the Columbia City Ballet office at 799-7605.



Prima Ballerina Dancer Julian Harper-Brown and Ballerina Patricia Miller as Romeo & Juliet. Photo by Allen Anderson.



as you can with any large group, but for the vast majority of tea party sorts, they simply represent a pure grass roots

They want the federal government's power to be limited by the Constitution. These are not

way that was threatening to the liberal establishment. Liberals cannot compete in the arena of

create this movement by pushing the envelope too far, but it

tea party is weeding out the bad apples. Most are like

dren. He is also cofounder and CEO of LUCA Sunscreen.

## A True Friend of Charleston, Frances R. S. Edmunds



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE EDMUNDS FAMILY AND HCF

In the delightful photograph above, Miss Frances Ravenel Smythe (before becoming Mrs. Edmunds) is completely at home enjoying the breeze on Charleston Harbor, and to the right, she stands proudly in front of a home in Ansonborough saved through the Revolving Fund that she started at Historic Charleston Foundation.

BY F. PRESTON WILSON

It is the exceptionally fortunate individual who is able to make her living doing something for which she has a burning passion. Most can only dream of having a calling and being compensated for such inspirations. Imagine doing something with such passion and conviction that you not only enhance the livability and prominence of your own city, but you also have a national impact on an entire industry. Such an individual is truly rare, and Charleston was

blessed to have this caliber of person in Frances Ravenel Smythe Edmunds.

In a time when preservation was less popular than taxes, Frances Edmunds, as leader of the newly formed Historic Charleston Foundation, fought tenaciously to preserve and restore what was fast becoming cannon fodder for new development. It is difficult to imagine how Charleston would now look if the likes of Frances and others before her had not arrived on the scene. As George W. Williams remembered his friend, "She was one of the great women in the vanguard

of those who preserved this city, a worthy successor to Miss Sue Frost." Frost, a key figure in the genesis of the Preservation Society of Charleston, also had the tenacity to protect and to project her devotion to the special dwellings throughout Charleston in practical ways.

I did not know until recently that it was Frances who pushed for the purchase of the Nathaniel Russell House, the onetime residence of my mother's great-great-grandparents, Governor and Mrs. R.F.W. Allston. For so many residents, she made HCF's mission personal and profound. This is but one example of the innumerable accomplishments of Frances Edmunds, and only further substantiates Peter McGee's sentiments in his regret of yet another generation's knowledge deficit regarding the accomplishments and contributions of those who went before us. In remembering his friend last week at the Second Presbyterian Church, Mr. McGee eulogized with great eloquence many facets of this determined lady and lamented how many of a younger generation would have benefited by refreshing contact with this fountain of wisdom.

In particular, one might point to her decision to start the revolving fund as the step that exponentially saved buildings in Ansonborough. The current executive director of HCF, Kitty Robinson, put this contribution into perspective: "Frances was the innovator of HCF's nationally recognized

Revolving Fund, which enabled HCF to purchase and sell historic properties with protective covenants to preservation-minded individuals and then reinvest the proceeds into protecting other properties. In this way, she and HCF led the way in preserving more than just individually significant buildings; she preserved the historic fabric of the city and the integrity of its neighborhoods."

It is only fitting that HCF named its top preservation recognition, the Edmunds Preservation Award, after Frances Edmunds. My father, Dr. Fraser Wilson, was awarded the Order of the Palmetto by five different governors of our beloved state, but he was most proud and humbled to be the 2005 recipient of the Edmunds Preservation Award. My brother and I were in attendance at the ceremony, and I can say with a high degree of certainty that this was one of the very few times Father was at a loss for words.

Anyone who knows Charleston and loves Charleston, as its citizens do, must surely feel a sense of awe and pride when wandering her beautiful streets and alleyways. Had it not been for the vision, sensitivity and persistence of preservation pioneers such as Frances Edmunds, Charleston might very well have become a far different place today. One can enumerate endlessly the accolades and achievements racked up by Frances Edmunds, but my sense is that all that was just a byproduct of her good work. It is nice to be recognized for your good work; it's even nicer to exist and thrive in its reality.

She was remarkably retentive of details, yet she never lost sight of the big picture. She could move from the beaded boards of a single



house to the fate of an entire neighborhood with the ease with which practiced singers change keys.

If there is one thing every good Charlestonian knows, it's his or her sense of place in the world today, how he or she fits in this beautiful tapestry of history and that, of course, the Ashley and Cooper converge to form the Atlantic Ocean. It is this same sense of place that Frances savored and fought so fiercely to protect. We as a city, a community and a fabric of families inextricably woven together for more than 300 years are grateful for the efforts and achievements of Frances Edmunds.

The awards, trophies and accolades fade with the passage of time as the city's heartbeat

remains strong and vibrant. If you wish to offer this distinguished lady compliments and praise, tell a young person what Frances did; through the natural discovery process and our thriving grapevine, your youthful friend will understand how you have both honored a great leader — and enlightened an inquiring mind in the spirit that Peter McGee suggested.

A resident of one of the neighborhoods Frances Edmunds protected in her long tenure with Historic Charleston Foundation, Preston Wilson is a member of the Charlestown Neighborhood Association's board and serves as chairman of its tourism committee.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR,

continued from page 8

Industries Week (May 2-8) and beyond, Goodwill asks the community to remember to donate the gently used clothing and house wares they no longer need so we can contin-

As we celebrate Goodwill Industries Week 2010, we want to say "Thank You" to our community whose support allows Goodwill to help our neighbors find employment

8:00 p.m. at the Robert Lange Studio, 2 Queen St., Charleston. I encourage anyone interested in broadening his or her business outlook to attend.

SUCCESS SELLING... GOOD HOUSES

May 2, 2010

EDITORIALS

Post & Courier

# Frances R. Edmunds

**T**he legacy of Frances Ravenel Smythe Edmunds goes far beyond the many historic buildings she helped protect in Charleston. Her work also enhanced the area's livability, its cultural environment, its businesses and tourism, and its beauty.

But as much as she did to shape Charleston, she also helped changed the face of preservation nationally.

When she was awarded the prestigious Louise du Pont Crowninshield Award by the National Trust in 1971, she said what was most exciting was not what had been accomplished but "a new recognition by a large group of people that preservation is sensible, practical and very much a part of the health of the urban complex."

Charleston, because of advocates like the dignified but tenacious Mrs. Edmunds, led the way for increasing national awareness of the importance of historic preservation. The concept of a revolving fund, which she helped develop to pay for restorations, has become a staple for preservation organizations nationally. And Charleston continues to benefit from her work on behalf of improved zoning and better planning.

Mayor Joe Riley said Mrs. Edmunds led the Historic Charleston Foundation to become "a national force, the gold standard of historic preservation."

In addition to numerous local and regional honors, including an honorary degree from the College of Charleston and a place in the S.C. Hall of Fame, she served on the Spoleto Festival USA board of directors and was a member of the Charleston Board of Architectural Review where she consistently pressed for good design and careful restorations. The Interior Department gave her its Conservation Science Award in 1979, and President Jimmy Carter appointed her to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

And when former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing visited Charleston, it was Mrs. Edmunds who acted as his guide.

Mrs. Edmunds was a persuasive person

with strong resolve, particularly as it related to preservation. In 1958, the foundation was able to buy the Russell House because of a \$32,500 from the Smith Richardson Foundation that Mrs. Edmunds and her associates matched in 10 days.

When that same foundation gave another \$25,000 to the HCF to go toward a \$100,000 revolving fund, Mrs. Edmunds and the foundation raised the other \$75,000.

With that innovative fund, the Historic Charleston Foundation bought and restored endangered properties. The houses were then sold to preservation-minded buyers and the money was reinvested in other endangered properties.

The transformation of Ansonborough from a dilapidated six-block area to a neighborhood of beautifully restored buildings was made possible by the revolving fund.

In 1986, a year after Frances Edmunds retired as director of the Historic Charleston Foundation, the foundation dedicated the Frances R. Edmunds Center for Historic Preservation at 108 Meeting Street, a former filling station. Some had looked at the building as something to raze — and quickly.

Not Mrs. Edmunds. As testament to her dedication to preservation, she saw its one-story profile as appropriate for that corner of Chalmers and Meeting streets and said it should not be sacrificed. The building continues to serve admirably.

Appropriately, the foundation's highest award for historic preservation is named for Mrs. Edmunds.

Charleston lawyer and preservationist Joseph H. McGee said, "My biggest regret is that, during her long illness, young people didn't get to know her and to appreciate the exceptional things she accomplished."

Frances Edmunds' life was dedicated to the preservation of the historic buildings and neighborhoods that make Charleston one of the most distinctive places in the nation. Her extraordinary contributions comprise an essential chapter in Charleston's history.

# Civic leader Edmunds dies at 93

EDMUNDS From Page 1A

contributions to our city are enormous, and they are lasting."

A Charleston native, Edmunds earned a bachelor's degree from the College of Charleston in 1939 and worked for The Evening Post for a brief time before her marriage in 1943 to Charleston lawyer S. Henry Edmunds.

She was the then-year-old foundation's first employee in 1948. Edmunds became the executive director in 1955, a position she held until her retirement in 1985. During her tenure, the Historic Charleston Foundation saved many historic buildings that were in danger of demolition or being sold to buyers who would not respect their architectural integrity.

"Frances was very smart," Riley said. "She was very strong, and she was very charming. And she had an amazing sense of good design. She was somebody who wasn't formally trained, but she was a natural."

During her career, she won several awards for her preservation efforts, including the Louise du Pont Crowninshield Award, the nation's highest honor in the area of preservation work, from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1971.

"The National Trust for Historic Preservation mourns the passing of this true pioneer of the preservation movement," said Richard Moe, president of the organization. "Frances Edmunds passionately fought

to protect Charleston's historic buildings from demolition and insensitive new development during her long career. Frances' long train of accomplishments and legacy will continue to inspire preservationists for years to come."

Jonathan Poston, who was hired by Edmunds in 1982 and worked for her until her retirement, said she was "extremely forward thinking. She saw things that needed to happen long before they did. She was the person who figured out the best way to save the old railroad center that's now the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. She started the first revolving fund in '58 and '59 that bought the first buildings in Ansonborough, one of her biggest legacies. She conceived that Drayton Hall should be saved and opened to the public."

Poston said Edmunds fought many zoning battles, but "she knew how to pick her battles. For instance, she decided not to oppose the development of Charleston Place but instead to work with the idea. I think it's important that she understood things like that. She knew how to deal with some really tough developers and people wanting to do things she thought would be wrong for Charleston."

In addition, he said, "she had an incredible innate sense of design and what was appropriate for the city. She was very quick to recognize bad design and lack of proportion. She really understood the city."

Poston left Charleston last

year to serve as director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's southwestern regional office. In an interview before he left town, he said the "Best Frances Edmunds quote" was "What's that?" He recalled the way she used an ivory African dagger to disarm developers seeking her favor on their downtown project. They would lay out their plans on her desk, and while they were explaining something, she would abruptly slap the dagger down on a different part of the rendering and ask her two-word question.

After her retirement, the foundation named a renovated 1930s gas station at Meeting and Chalmers streets as the Frances R. Edmunds Center for Historic Preservation. The building is dedicated to public education and provides exhibits relating to the history and preservation of Charleston, as well as architectural artifacts salvaged from grand Charleston buildings that have been destroyed.

The foundation also named its highest award the Frances Edmunds Award in her honor, and established the Frances R. Edmunds Society to honor "her indomitable spirit of leadership and her 'can-do' attitude."

Edmunds also received the U.S. Interior Department's conservation Service Award, and was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Edmunds was inducted into the South Carolina Hall of Fame in 1998.

Arrangements are being handled by Stuhls downtown.

CHARLESTON

# Pioneer helped preserve history

Frances Edmunds, tireless civic leader, dies at 93

BY BRENDA RINDGE  
The Post and Courier

Frances Ravenel Smythe Edmunds, a pioneer in Charleston's preservation movement who helped shape the present-day look of the city, died Friday. She was 93.



Edmunds spent 38 years at the Historic Charleston Foundation, moving from tour director to executive director, and helped Edmunds start the fund that saved historic homes from demolition in the Ansonborough area and throughout the peninsula.

"When the history of the 20th century in Charleston is written, prominent will be the story of Frances Edmunds and her role in our city," said Charleston Mayor Joe Riley on Friday. "The leadership she gave the foundation made it not only an institution of indescribable influence in our city, but it also became a national force, the gold standard of historic preservation. I thought the world of her, and her



## PRESENTING FRANCES R. EDMUNDS

Director, Historic Charleston Foundation

For Mrs. S. Henry Edmunds, Director of Historic Charleston Foundation, the preservation of Charleston's architectural heritage isn't over — it is just getting into full swing to begin a fourth century of never-ending work and guardianship. That is her opinion after watching, and having a role in the saving of hundreds of houses in the old city.

Restoration and preservation of worthwhile structures isn't just a way of life for her — it is her life's spectrum.

And that spectrum covers the whole gamut of Charleston's still standing record of nearly three centuries of building from the magnificence that is evidenced in the Nathaniel Russell House Museum and the William Gibbes House to the simple lines of a small outbuilding that visitors rarely see.

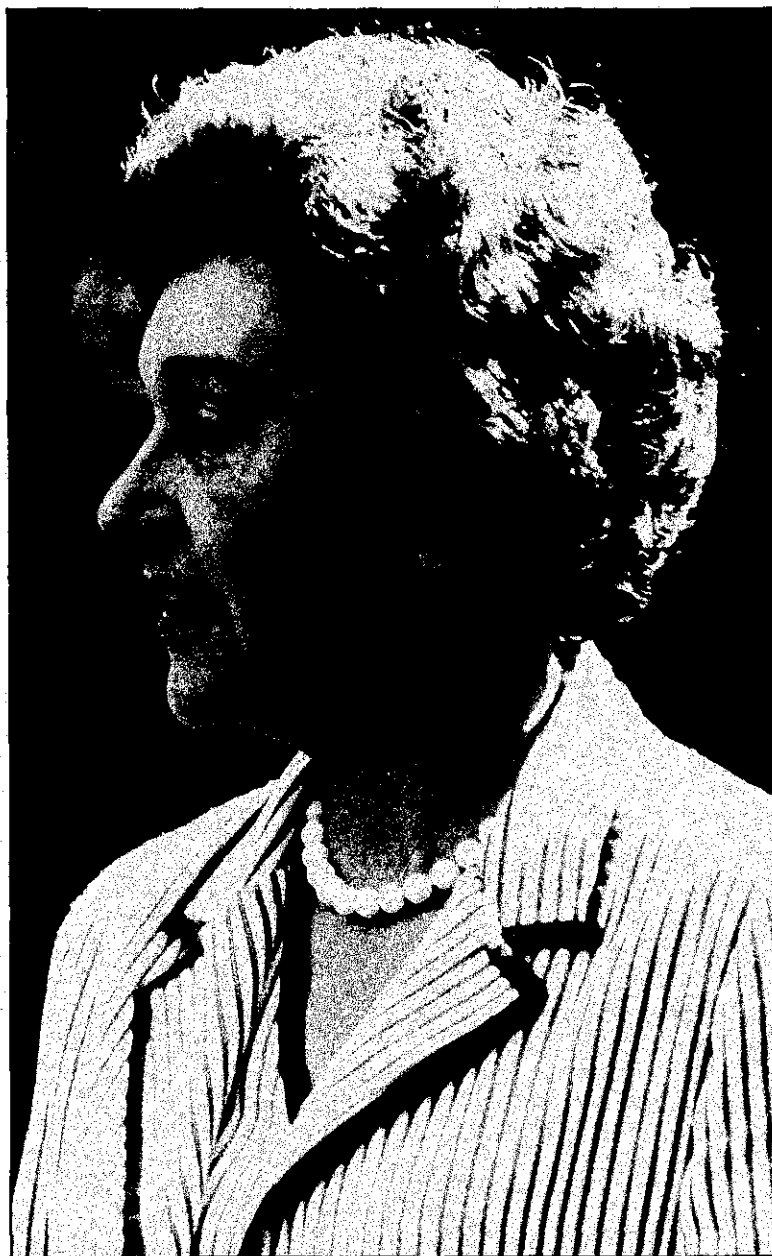
For Frances Ravenel Edmunds, the philosophy of preservation incorporates the warp and woof of the old city seen as a tapestry, a masterpiece that must have most of its parts to guarantee that future generations will be able to see and appreciate their heritage.

Physically, her involvement with restoration and preservation in Charleston goes back to 1947 when the Historic Charleston Foundation was born, an organization with an idea that was new on the stage of preservation.

Thirty-seven years later, Historic Charleston Foundation can look back on work that is physically in evidence regarding the success of the program it initiated. Hundreds of houses are in use today as fashionable residences or multi-use buildings, houses that undoubtedly would have long ago either fallen before the wrecker's ball, burned or simply deteriorated into termite-shredded ruins.

Says Mrs. Edmunds: "As I compare what we have with what exists elsewhere, I always come home realizing that we are most fortunate people in Charleston. I come back refreshed, but with the knowledge that we cannot take anything for granted. There are large areas that still need work and guiding hands. That is where the foundation's future lies."

As far as Frances Edmunds is concerned the work of the foundation continues today as a caretaker and advisory group. She says, "The preservation movement must adjust itself to the challenges of the time and to education. Today, education of the public to the need for preservation and to the value of our public heritage, of our environment, is most important. The program must always be quick on its feet, quick to recognize danger and quick to meet and defeat it."



Mrs. S. Henry Edmunds, Director of Historic Charleston Foundation.

## NOTEWORTHY MISCELLANY

Have you seen our silverplated trivet (C-0203) by KIRK STIEFF featured on page 64C in the May issue of *Gourmet* magazine? This handsome reproduction of the original in an historic Charleston house is among the most popular gift items in the Reproductions line.

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Our full-color catalog will be offered in *Time* magazine's summer Olympics special supplement in the August 20 issue. This advertisement will generate

additional interest in the Reproductions Program and stimulate catalog sales.

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Blue Canton porcelain was included on the cover of the June issue of *House Beautiful* magazine and in the associated article beginning on page 70.

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WOODBINE HERB COMPANY has created a delicate pot pourri exclusively for Historic Charleston Reproductions. Attractively packaged and moderately priced, this fragrant pot pourri has impressive customer appeal.



Infstand Lamp (HC-30) by NORMAN PERRY, adapted from infstand in an historic Charleston house. Available in polished or antiqued brass finish. Green hard-cover paper shade with gold trim. 25" H. (See note under "Look For" next page.)

# 'Lady' Edmunds leaves a precious preservation legacy

BY KATHARINE S. ROBINSON

It seems most fitting to honor Frances Edmunds during the month of May as May is National Preservation Month. Frances Ravenel Smythe Ed-



Robinson

munds, who died at the age of 93 last month, signaling the end of an era, was a prominent and nationally recognized Charlestonian whose name is synonymous with historic preservation in America. She will be forever remembered and revered in the annals of Charleston's rich history. A true legend in her own time with a sterling reputation spanning decades, her widespread and powerful influence continues to be recognized far beyond the limits of Charleston and the Carolina Low-country.

From Historic Charleston Foundation's founding in 1947, Frances Edmunds as its first executive director established herself as a formidable force in the American preservation movement. From the first Festival of Houses held in the spring of 1948 to the Foundation's purchase of the Nathaniel Russell House in 1955, she was not only a pioneer in her efforts to raise funds and awareness for preservation through private house tours, she led the effort to raise funds for the purchase of the endangered Russell House, c. 1808, and to establish it as a house museum.

These two ingenious efforts were immediately successful and remain hallmarks of Historic Charleston Foundation's initiatives to promote preservation and educational programs. The overwhelming success

**She was a brilliant change agent who understood and promoted economic viability, cultural enhancement and quality of life for residents and visitors alike.**

of the 2010 Festival of Houses and Gardens (marking its 63rd consecutive season) underscores its position as the Foundation's largest earned income program, and the iconic Nathaniel Russell House stands proudly as one of the City's finest and most visited house museums and has an individual listing as a National Historic Landmark.

Frances Edmunds' office, on the third floor of the Russell House, was aptly named the "Oval Office" because of its actual architectural configuration, yet the significance of its name seems appropriate for her almost 40 year reign as one of the most powerful figures in Charleston and beyond.

The combination of Mrs. Edmunds' inherent confidence, passion and perseverance was awesome to behold and also keenly effective as one noteworthy accomplishment followed another during her long and productive tenure. The Ansonborough project brought national attention to Historic Charleston Foundation and to Charleston when she created America's first revolving fund in the late 1950s.

By 1970 her brilliant idea had come to fruition and virtually saved one of Charleston's most beautiful and historic neighborhoods. She naturally became an important national com-

mentator on the value of adaptive use of historic buildings, and in 1971 she was awarded the Louise DuPont Crowninshield Award, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's highest honor. The Trust acknowledged her revolutionary idea of revitalizing an entire neighborhood through preservation by using a Revolving Fund as a financing strategy. In granting the award, the Trust noted that Ansonborough was the first area rehabilitation project in America and that her "native warmth and wisdom, her infinite finesse and great tenacity of purpose already have left their mark on historic preservation in the United States."

Today, nearly 100 houses and properties have been purchased, protected, preserved and resold through the Foundation's Revolving Fund. On the occasion of Historic Charleston Foundation's 60th anniversary in 2007, the Fund was appropriately and reverently renamed the Edmunds Revolving Fund.

Under Mrs. Edmunds' leadership, the Foundation's inaugural easements program was begun in 1982. As one of the most successful conservation strategies employed by the Foundation, the easement program enables us to protect the historic fabric of properties in private ownership. In essence, an easement is a partial interest in a piece of property that takes the form of a set of restrictive covenants attached to a deed. The nascent program accepted eight easements in the early 1980s and now has grown to nearly 400 properties throughout the Low-country. The extraordinary success of the HCF easement program, another testament to Mrs. Edmunds' innovative thinking, guarantees the protection and preservation of these properties in perpetuity via the Foundation's co-stewardship.



Frances Edmunds

Among numerous other prestigious awards, distinctions, and appointments, Frances was the recipient of the first honorary degree granted to a woman by the College of Charleston in 1972. In 1979 she was appointed to a five-year term on the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. She was a director of the Historic House Association of America and a director of Spoleto Festival USA. She was chairman of the Drayton Hall Council of the National Trust and served as a trustee of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, Monticello. She was inducted into the South Carolina Hall of Fame in 1998. An historical exhibit describing her prominence as a preservationist is displayed in The Shops of Historic Charleston Foundation at 108 Meeting Street. A plaque there also recognizes the building as the site of the Frances R. Edmunds Center for Historic Preservation, 1986-2007.

A widely respected leader of leaders, lovingly and appropriately called "Lady" by her grandchildren, Frances Edmunds will be forever remembered

for her innovative ideas and decisive actions which made her a guardian of Charleston's architecture, history and culture and left their mark on her beloved city. Her resolve to preserve and protect Charleston's unique integrity influenced legislation, growth, development and livability.

She was a brilliant change agent who understood and promoted economic viability, cultural enhancement and quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Not one to shy away from controversy, she was a force with which to be reckoned. Throughout her decades of service as the Foundation's executive director, she was considered an iconic preservationist and was highly respected throughout the country.

Wherever preservation is taught, or the history of preservation in this country is mentioned, Frances Edmunds' name stands out as a daring pioneer and leading preservationist. Her advocacy and actions contributed enormously to the built environment and the quality of life we enjoy in Charleston today.

The legend and legacy of Frances Edmunds lives on through the Edmunds Revolving Fund, the Festival of Houses and Gardens, the hundreds of properties protected by easements and Charleston's sterling reputation as America's best preserved city.

With unwavering respect and admiration, on behalf of the foundation's trustees and staff, past and present, I say thank you to Frances Ravenel Edmunds for her countless and lasting contributions which shall be forever considered an integral part of Charleston's unparalleled preservation success story.

Katharine S. Robinson is executive director of Historic Charleston Foundation.

Post & Courier, 5/24/2010