

THE FIRST OF THE HSF'S SEVEN: ANNA COLQUITT HUNTER

Obituary – January 29, 1985 – Savannah Morning News

Anna Hunter, Preservationist, Artist, Dies at 91

By Tom Coffey, Associate Editor

Anna Colquitt Hunger, retired newspaper editor, noted artist and early leader in Savannah's historic preservation movement died today at Ocean-side Convalescent Home on Tybee Island after a long illness. She was 91.

Mrs. Hunter, former book review and arts editor of the Savannah Morning News, began painting at an advanced age, intrigued with a field of artistic expression she had covered as a newspaper-woman for years. Her success as a painter in oils was almost immediate.

It was Mrs. Hunter who, in the 1950s during the demolition of the old Savannah City Market on Ellis Square, sparked the citizens' movement that resulted in the formation of Historic Savannah Foundation Inc. With the Market, one of Savannah's architectural and historical landmarks, gone she challenged the community not to let the demolition ball remove other valuable evidences of Savannah's heritage.

Her efforts paid off. The organizers of the foundation chose the Davenport House, facing Columbia Square, as their first project, reconvertng what had degenerated into a slum building into what it had been during the downtown Savannah's heyday.

The restoration and preservation movement, which had been sporadic before then with renovations occurring in selected spots, gained momentum

with the Davenport House project. Savannah's reputation in restoration now is known worldwide.

Mrs. Hunter's career as a newspaperwoman spanned 45 years before her retirement on October 1, 1958.

She began as a staff writer for the old Savannah Press when her sister, the late Hattie Colquitt, was society editor. After the merger of the Press in 1930, she wrote for both papers.

Before World War II, she was a reporter, art critic and editorial writer for the Evening Press, which she left after the United States entered the war to serve as field writer with the American Red Cross. She saw overseas service in the Mediterranean and European theaters.

She joined the staff of the Morning News after the war, as art critic and book review editor and occasionally covered general assignments and wrote editorials. At a retirement ceremony in the newsroom, she was praised for her contribution to journalism and her native city.

A year before her retirement, in recognition of her spearheading the restoration movement, Mrs. Hunter became the first woman to win Savannah's top civic award, the Oglethorpe Trophy, which followed her designation as winner of the Thomas Gignilliat Award in recognition of contributions to community culture.

Mrs. Hunter's career as an artist in oils emerged as a by-product of her general interest in the things around her. She

explained that she had an inner urge to

paint, decided to try it, and did. She began painting about the time she wrote an article commenting on the sudden popularity of the pastime in Savannah.

She gave her first show at the Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1973. She had covered the Telfair and one-man shows there for years and her show was regarded as a milestone of her career. She earlier had exhibited in other cities. The painting displayed at her first show in Charleston, SC, won critical acclaim as "sophisticated primitive" works by an artist who was "practically self-taught."

Mrs. Hunter was a communicant of Christ Episcopal Church and covered many conventions of the Diocese of Georgia. She was the widow of George L. C. Hunter, a member of a family prominent in Savannah's growth.

Surviving are two daughters, Dr. Harriot Hunter Jardine of Denver, CO and Mrs. Heyward Lynah of Charleston; seven grandchildren, several great-grandchildren and two Savannah cousins, Adrian Colquitt and Mrs. Paschal N. Strong.

Private funeral services will be delayed pending the return of a daughter from Hawaii.

Fox and Weeks Funeral Home.

