

HUNTSVILLE- MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESERVING THE PAST TO ENRICH THE FUTURE

Fall Newsletter

COLLECTING, PRESERVING, RECORDING AND PROMOTING HISTORY SINCE 1951

FALL 2017

HUNTSVILLE REVISITED, TOPIC FOR SEPTEMBER 10 MEETING

We'll be revisiting Huntsville of decades past at our next meeting, Sunday, September 10, at 2 p.m. at the Huntsville/Madison County Public Library.

Our speaker will be William Hampton, creator of the popular Facebook group "Huntsville Revisited," where local residents share their pictures and recollections from the Rocket City. Hampton will be sharing some of his favorite pictures and stories from the page.

The Huntsville Revisited Facebook group springs from an effort that Hampton began in 1978, and last year was recognized by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution with a Community Service Award.

A native of Huntsville, Hampton is the founder of Touch the World.



Huntsville Revisited is home to a massive collection of photographs of Huntsville's past, like this Washington Street scene...

***The next Society meeting is
Sunday, September 10, at 2:00
in the Library auditorium.***

TWO HISTORICAL MARKERS DEDICATED



Huntsville Female Seminary - Alex Luttrell (from left), Joyce Smith, Nancy Rohr, Lindsey Wright, John Allen, and Tom Wright at the unveiling of the new marker at the former site of the Huntsville Female Seminary.

In the last three months, two historical markers have been dedicated in Madison County.

On June 11, a new marker was dedicated at the site of Huntsville Female Seminary. The marker is located at 512 Randolph Avenue in front of the home of Dr. and Mrs. Tom Wright.

The Huntsville Female Seminary was built in 1831 to house one of the first girls' schools in Alabama to offer a more highly structured and advanced curriculum than most Southern female colleges. In 1854, architect George Steele designed a new Gothic façade for the building. In 1862, the seminary closed when the building was used as a hospital for smallpox victims during the Civil War. It reopened from 1867 until 1875, after which the building housed a variety of other educational institutions. It was razed in the early 1900s by A. M. Booth, who used some of the original building elements to build his home. That home is now owned by the Wright.

On July 30, a marker was rededicated at the site of the home of John Williams Walker, who was president of Alabama's First Constitutional Convention in 1819 and was the state's first U.S. Senator from 1819 until 1822. Walker County in northwest Alabama, created in 1823, was named in his honor.

The marker is located in front of the modern log cabin home of “Print Two Impress” at 12883 Hwy 231-431 N, Hazel Green, between Steger Road and Walker Lane. After missing for several years, this marker has been found, restored and relocated to a more publicly accessible location.



John Williams Walker — David Hitt, Roger Jones, Joyce Smith, Alex Luttrell, Julian Butler, Nancy Rohr, John Allen, Danny Brown, David Robb, and Matthew Hillis at the re-installation of the John Williams Walker historical marker.

SPREADING HOPE TO LOCAL SCHOOLS

Historical Society board member Kelly Hamlin spoke to a group of more than 50 Weatherly Heights Elementary School Teachers in July about HOPE, the History Outreach Program for Educators. Through HOPE, teachers can now go to a single website for digitized local history resources, including music, photographs, oral histories, books, videos, journals, places, archives, contests, and more--all ideally suited for embellishing lesson plans for the three-year Bicentennial. The July talk was part of an ongoing effort to reach local teachers and let them know about the resources that are being made available. For more information, visit [www-w.hmchs.org/hope.html](http://www.hmchs.org/hope.html) or contact Hamlin at kelly.fisk.hamlin@gmail.com

SOCIETY ELECTS NEW OFFICERS TO TWO-YEAR TERM

At its June meeting, the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society elected a new slate of officers to serve for the next two years. They are: David Hitt, president; Jodi Stephens, vice-president; Sharon Lang, recording secretary; Wayne Smith, treasurer; and board members Carol Codori, Sam Tumminello, Deane Dayton, and Kelly Fisk Hamlin. John Allen, the immediate past president of the Society, joins Ron Bledsoe, Jacque Reeves, Joyce Smith and Gary Wicks as past presidents continue to serve the Society as members of the board. Alex Luttrell is the head of the Marker Committee, and Arley McCormick is the editor of the *Huntsville Historical Review*.

Note from the President:

The next two years will be an exciting time, as Alabama’s bicentennial celebration ramps up and Huntsville and Madison County play a big role in the observance. We have a great team leading the efforts of the Society. I’m honored to be a part of it and I’m extremely grateful to John Allen for the work he has done as our president for the last two years.

I believe that these next two years present us with both an opportunity and a challenge – during the state’s bicentennial observance, there will be greater awareness of local history, and thus an excellent opportunity to engage our community. But that opportunity comes with a commission – if there’s never been a time like now to share the stories of our county’s history, we have an obligation to share them now. The one constant in Huntsville is change – the city continues to grow, and new people continue to move in. No matter how long you’ve lived here, it’s hard not to love Huntsville, and it’s easy to see the pride that even relatively new residents have in the community. Many of them, however, have never had the opportunity to hear the stories that made this area what it is (and, truth be told, there are no doubt many longer-term residents who could say the same).

For the next two years, the Society will focus on sharing those stories, and building awareness of local history in the community – How was Huntsville born? What role did we play in Alabama’s statehood? What happened here during the Civil War? Why are we the Rocket City? My goal over the next two years is for more local residents to be able to answer those questions, and my challenge to you is to do the same.

We have an incredible community, and it is built on incredible stories. I’m proud to be part of a Society that continues to play an incredible role in sharing them.



Board — Ron Bledsoe (back row, from left), Carol Codori, Dean Dayton, Alex Luttrell, (middle row) Sam Tumminello, Arley McCormick, Jodi Stephens, Joyce Smith, Wayne Smith, Jacque Reeves, (front row) Sharon Lang and John Allen will serve as officers and board members of the Historical Society for the next two years.

DR. JOHN RISON JONES SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST ANNOUNCED

The Dr. John Rison Jones Award for Southern History is presented each year by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society to an undergraduate student who most exemplifies Dr. Jones's commitment to history. A deserving student will be selected based upon his/her written work documenting an aspect of Madison County/North Alabama southern history as part of their writing initiative or course of study. The recipient need not intend to pursue a degree in History.

- Undergraduate during academic year 2017-2018
- A submitted manuscript is the application for the Scholarship.
- Students may submit more than one manuscript per school year representing course work in each semester.
- The manuscript shall be a minimum of 5,000 words and may include photos, charts, maps or other amplifying features.
- The student must submit their resume with their document and include personal attributes and achievements regarding positions held in clubs or societies, church, and/or specific community service or volunteerism.
- The Scholarship Award Ceremony will be scheduled by the Society and all scholarship recipients and their families and friends will be invited. An applicant's inability to attend the awards ceremony in person will not impact on his/her eligibility for a scholarship.

The awardee will receive \$250 and his/her manuscript will be published in the *Huntsville Historical Review*, a biyearly journal sponsored by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, it is the primary voice of the local history movement in northern Alabama and reflects the richness and diversity of Madison County and North Alabama.

Although this publication focuses on local history, we cannot forget that what happens here has roots connected by state, regional, national, and international events.

The recipient will be selected by a panel of local historians associated with the Historical Society. Review Content and Style

- In matters of form and style, a good guide is the fourteenth or fifteenth edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- Include footnotes and the preferred citation method for full articles.
- Manuscripts should be in Times New Roman 12-point font. Microsoft Word

Manuscript Preparation and Submission.

- The manuscript shall be a minimum of 5,000 words and may include photos, charts, maps or other amplifying features.

Please submit an electronic copy of your to arleymcormick@comcast.net. Questions may be directed this email address.

PRELUDE TO THE GREAT WAR – NO SLACKERS IN MADISON COUNTY

Continuing our observation of the centennial of World War I, the following is an excerpt from an article by Jacque Reeves in the Fall/Winter 2015 volume of the *Huntsville Historical Review*. You can read the rest of the article at:

http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/hhpics/pdf/hhr/Volume_40_2_Fall-Winter-15.pdf

National Registration Day was set for June 5, 1917. All men of conscription age, including those in prisons, were required to register. Patriotic speeches and the singing of “America The Beautiful” at the Madison County courthouse would inspire young men who could register at the courthouse or at their voting precinct. Two local brothers, Stanley McKee and Gus McKee had already enlisted. Gus was reported to be on his way to France after he had qualified as an “aeroplane” machinist. The McKee brothers weren’t the only Huntsville men anxious to get into the fray. The Huntsville Mercury printed the names of the first to enlist as reserve officers. Among them were W. H. Blanton, Homer T. Baker, Edward Betts, Harry and Charles Landman, Walter Wellman, and Reavis O’Neal. These men would receive \$100 per month and be sent to Chattanooga to train. It was expected that 1/3 of those men who enlisted would be rejected during the first examination based on mental or physical disabilities.

... The Huntsville Mercury listed names of financial donors – individuals and companies who supported the Doughboys. It served the war effort well. Other companies boasted that they also had workers who had enlisted to fight, and public bragging served as excellent advertising for those companies. Lists of donors and volunteers soon filled the papers. Other lists would be printed as well, according to the Mercury. “Slackers” who had not registered as required, would have their names published on “roll of infamy.”

Also listed were the national draft numbers as they were drawn. Madison County was required to send 410 men in the first round of draftees. The first five Madison County men whose numbers were drawn were: Henry McGee, Eddie Suggs, Charlie Bible, Milton Herd, and Shelly Alexander.

Still, there were items for the society page in addition to world and local news in the newspaper. One story suggested a resolution to the problem of speeders. If the speedometer on a racing automobile reached 15 miles per hour, a white bulb would light up on the radiator. If the car reached 25 miles per hour, a green bulb would light up. At 40 miles per hour, a red bulb would light, but if it went to 50 miles per hour, a music box underneath the driver’s seat would begin to play, “Nearer My God to Thee.”

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AT HUNTSVILLE-MADISON
COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WWW.HMCHS.ORG

David Hitt, president; Jodi Stephens, vice-president; Wayne Smith, treasurer; Sharon Lang, recording secretary; Arley McCormick, editor Historical Review; Alex Luttrell, head Marker Committee; Jacque Reeves, past president/vice president; Ron Bledsoe, past president/vice president; Deane Dayton, archivist; Kelly Fisk Hamlin, HOPE; Sam Tumminello, Facebook; David Byers, John Allen, Carol Codori, Joyce Smith and Gary Wicks, past presidents.



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