**Sen. Arthur Orr to keynote Ranee Pruitt History Award luncheon**

Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle will introduce Sen. Arthur Orr at the first-ever Ranee Pruitt awards luncheon on March 22. Sen. Orr, of Decatur, represents Alabama’s Third District and is chairman of the Alabama Bicentennial Commission.

A local historian will be presented with the Ranee Pruitt Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation in Huntsville and Madison County. The event will begin at noon at the Huntsville Country Club, 2601 Oakwood Avenue.

**Local records preservationist to speak at the March 12 meeting**

One of the founders of our Historical Society more than 60 years ago was Dr. Frances Cabaniss Roberts. She taught history at Huntsville High School for 12 years and was the first full-time faculty member at UAHuntsville where she taught for 29 years. She is considered to be the founding force behind Huntsville’s Old Town and Twickenham historical districts, Huntsville’s Constitution Hall Village, the Huntsville Historical Society. Her extensive records are now preserved at the UAH Salmon Library’s Special Collections archive. Local historian and preservationist John Rankin will present an overview of this collection at the Society’s next general membership meeting on Sunday March 12 at 2:00 p.m. at the HMCP Library.

He will also illustrate the process of digitization he uses, and the resultant evolving database developed by Dr. Deane Dayton to make the collection searchable on-line. To conclude, he will list a few of the interesting case examples, allowing for audience selection to see the details of the data -- all in a Power Point presentation.

A native of Mississippi, John Rankin retired after a 31-year professional engineering and management career with Boeing where his work included design and development of every U. S. manned space project from Apollo through the International Space Station.

Since retirement, John Rankin has been researching the history of Madison and its pioneer families while participating in various projects with the Madison Station Historical Preservation Society. He assisted the Army on Redstone Arsenal in documenting the history of its land pioneers. In these capacities, he has prepared extensive reports on the cemeteries in the Madison and Redstone Arsenal areas.

For five years he wrote the weekly column “Vintage Vignettes” for the Huntsville Times telling of Madison-area early settlers. Along the way he has been a member of the book committees for development of county heritage books about Madison, Morgan, Marshall, Lawrence, and Limestone counties of north Alabama. And for the last 15 years he has been digitizing the historical records in the Tax Assessor’s archive, the Probate Office’s Madison County Records Center, and lately concentrating upon the Dr. Frances Roberts historical papers.

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"It is the duty of every good citizen to use all the opportunities, which occur to him, for preserving documents relating to the history of our country."

*Thomas Jefferson, October 4, 1823*
NEW BICENTENNIAL EMBLEM ANNOUNCED FOR HISTORICAL MARKERS

By Alex Luttrell

The Alabama Historical Association (AHA) Marker Committee recently announced a special crest/emblem for all markers approved during the 2017-2019 Bicentennial period.

Meanwhile, the HMCHS Marker Committee met on 22 February to review recent activities and discuss plans for the coming year. The Committee reviewed a plan for participating in the Alabama Territory/Statehood Bicentennial from 2017-2019. At the top of the list was the re-erection (following refurbishment) of two markers: John Williams Walker Home Site and City of Huntsville. Both of these markers have direct ties to early statehood. Ideas for new markers to celebrate the bicentennial were also discussed.

Marker refurbishment continues to be a major thrust, as well. Restoration Huntsville completed the refurbishment of three additional markers: St. Mary’s Church of the Visitation, Buckhorn Tavern, and Town of Gurley. Each of these markers was re-erected in late 2016. The company is now working on four additional markers: First Presbyterian Church, Town of New Market, General John Hunt Morgan, and Harrison Brothers Hardware.

Our Society is collaborating with other local historical/civic organizations to assist in their marker refurbishment efforts. The Tennessee Valley Civil War Round Table, the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Colonists, and the Historic Huntsville Foundation have agreed to fund the refurbishment of the General John Hunt Morgan, Bell Factory, and Harrison Brothers Hardware markers, respectively.

The Committee also heard exciting news from the AHA Marker Committee. The AHA Marker Committee received a $50,000 grant from the Alabama Tourism Department to assist in refurbishing AHA markers. Hopefully, we will be able to receive some assistance from this grant.

Finally, I gave a marker presentation to the Madison Station Historic Preservation Society in Nov. 2016. The group discussed possible new markers for that community, as well as the re-erection of the City of Madison marker following construction work in the downtown area.

The Society is still searching for storage space, preferably its own permanent archive/museum. Pictured above are board members Arley McCormick, Deane Dayton, and John Allen, who recently moved these items from the garage of Bob Adams to Arley’s basement. We also have archives at three additional locations. Ideally, we need space to curate donated items, storage with filing cabinets, and a board-meeting room; a restroom would be nice.

FACEBOOK HELPS HOPE FIND SUPPORT IN THE HOMESCHOOL COMMUNITY

By Kelly Fisk Hamlin

Last summer your Historical Society launched its new education initiative, known as the History Outreach Program for Educators (HOPE), to raise awareness of digitized local history resources for the classroom.

While the HOPE homepage is accessible via the HMCHS website, the HOPE Facebook page helps us reach a broad audience with compelling images and histories that highlight the teaching resources available at the HOPE website.

This project has seen strong support from the local homeschool community, and the Facebook page has proven to be an opportunity for "sharing" beyond our network of HMCHS members.

With Alabama’s focus on the Bicentennial for the next three years, HOPE can be a portal to help teachers generate lesson plans for our state’s early history.

To help raise awareness of this important initiative, follow the HOPE project on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HistoryHOPE. If you have any questions about the HOPE initiative, contact me at kelly.fisk.hamlin@gmail.com.
SELECTED HISTORICAL REVIEW ARTICLES REBOUND FOR THE BICENTENNIAL

By Jacque Reeves

The following chapters represent our earliest history, from territorial days to the earliest period of statehood. Volume 1 will be available later this year.

Early American Constitution Hall
Madison County Mississippi Territorial Period, 1804 – 1817
Williams Street
Early Huntsville’s West Side Square
Archaeological Information from the Constitution Hall State Park Site
Alabama Makes her Debut into the Union
Huntsville’s Green Academy 1812 – 1862
In Search of a Man Named Ditto
The Public Square in Madison County
The News from Huntsville
Jackson’s Victorious Return
King Cotton in Madison County
1819 – Alabama Becomes a State
An Excerpt of the Enabling Act
Cahaba – Alabama’s First Permanent Capital
Madison County – Clement Comer Clay
Madison County – Gabriel Moore
Monroe County – John Murphy
Monroe County – John Watkins
Washington County – Henry Hitchcock
The Broad River Group of Georgia
Rise and Fall of King Cotton
The Big Spring of Huntsville
Fare Thee Well from the Papers of John Williams Walker

WORLD WAR I CENTENNIAL WEBSITE LAUNCHED

The U.S. Army Center of Military History recently launched the World War I Centennial Website. It is a user-friendly, interactive site that is organized in a content-driven manner, making it accessible and useful to educators, researchers or anyone interested in delving deeper into the specific aspects of the American experience in the Great War (the U.S. entered the war on April 6, 1917).

The site contains informative and educational content, pictures, videos and research material on the American involvement in World War I. It is set up chronologically from mobilization through the Treaty of Versailles.

The site also features links to related World War I resources and an events calendar for all U.S. and overseas commemorative events. Check out the CMH website for more information on the WWI Centennial Website at www.army.history.mil (thanks to Sharon Lang)

Attention members: If you would like to serve on the Society board of directors, or if you would like to assist on any of our numerous projects, contact John Allen at 256-539-5287 or email jha@knology.net
Huntsville- Madison County Historical Society
Preserving the Past to Enrich the Future

at Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society
WWW.HMCHS.ORG

Board of Directors: John Allen, Wayne Smith, Sharon Lang, Arley McCormick, Jacque Reeves, Gary Wicks, Carol Cadori, Ron Bledsoe, Deane Dayton, David Hitt, David Byers, George Mahoney, Sam Tumminello, and Bob Adams.