TWO HISTORICAL MARKERS
TO BE DEDICATED; TWO
MORE PLANNED

The dedication of the Huntsville Female Seminary historical marker is scheduled for 4 pm Sunday, June 11th, following the Historical Society’s general membership meeting. The location is 512 Randolph Avenue in front of the home of Dr. & Mrs. Tom Wright.

The Huntsville Female Seminary was built by architect George Steele 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. The Seminary closed in 1862, when the building was used as a hospital for smallpox victims during the Civil War. The Seminary reopened in 1867-75, after which the structure housed a variety of other educational institutions. The building was razed in the early 1900s by A. M. Booth who used some of the original building elements to build his home which is now owned by the Wrights. In the event of rain, the dedication will be held in the library auditorium following the HMCHS meeting.

The John Williams Walker Home Site historical marker will be rededicated at 2 pm on Sunday, July 30th, in its new location in front of the modern log cabin, which houses “Print Two Impress,” located on the west side of Highway 231/431 North, between Steger Road and Walker Lane, approximately two miles north of Meridianville and just south of Posey’s Restaurant.

After missing for several years, this marker has been found, restored and relocated to a more publicly accessible location. It marks the home site of John Williams Walker, President of Alabama’s First Constitutional Convention 1819 and Alabama’s first U. S. Senator 1819-22. Walker County in northwest Alabama, created 1823, was named in his honor.

Local historian and Society member Nancy Rohr will offer a short background on the markers at the dedication of each one.

In addition, the marker committee has worked with the City to reinstall the Huntsville Firsts marker in Big Spring Park on the east side of Church Street, and also the marker for the original site of Lakeside United Methodist Church on Jefferson Street, north of “The Avenue Apartments,” and across from W. L. Halsey Grocery.

LAGRANGE COLLEGE, TOPIC
FOR JUNE 11 MEETING

In addition to election of new officers and refreshments, we have a terrific program about an area college that is no more.

Our speaker is Robert Steen, discussing his book, “The History of LaGrange College.” Some of our members may not know that LaGrange College, which opened in 1830, is considered the forerunner of University of North Alabama. In 1858 the college’s name was changed to LaGrange Military Academy and was referred to as the West Point of the South. Union soldiers burned the school in 1863.

Robert Steen is a native of Lauderdale County and a graduate of Florence State College, University of Iowa, and Troy State University. He served 21 years active duty in the U.S. Army, which included 2 tours in Vietnam. After retirement, he worked as Personnel Director for the City of Florence, and Human Resources Director at UNA. He has written a number of articles, and is presently working on a two-volume history about the University of North Alabama.
TWO LOCAL HISTORIANS RECEIVE RANEE PRUITT AWARD

Kudos to John Rankin and Nancy Rohr, recipients of the first annual Raneé Pruitt Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation in Huntsville and Madison County.

Rankin is a retired space-program engineer and a 15-year volunteer in digitizing old Madison County probate and tax records. He’s also documented old cemeteries all over the county, including Redstone Arsenal. In addition, he’s helped develop heritage books for five counties in north Alabama.

Rohr is a popular speaker on local history and author of two books, including Incidents of the War - The Civil War Journal of Mary Jane Chadick. She’s also written ten articles on local history.

The award is named for Raneé Pruitt, longtime archivist at the Huntsville Library’s Special Collections Department, and also the portal to local history for researchers for many years.

The presentations were made March 22 at the Huntsville Country Club, and served also as the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society’s kick-off for the Alabama Bicentennial, which runs from 2017 to 2019. Mayor Tommy Battle introduced keynote speaker, 3rd District Sen. Arthur Orr, who is chairman of the Alabama Bicentennial Commission.

Your Society also honored Joyce Markwardt Smith and Alex Luttrell with framed certificates of appreciation. Joyce was honored for her dedicated service to the Society for 56 years, from 1961 to present, including serving as president on two different occasions, plus serving as president of the Alabama Historical Association in 1999. Alex was honored for his 20 years of dedicated service to the Society as chairman of the Historical Marker Committee, erecting 43 new markers and repair or refurbishment of 48 markers.
**History Club Begins**

The Elizabeth Dale Society held its inaugural meeting recently at the Golden Corral Restaurant. Sponsored by the HMCHS, the purpose of the Elizabeth Dale Society is to provide a monthly interface with area historians in a social setting, and who should leave every meeting having learned something new about our area’s history.

Elizabeth Dale was actually Elizabeth Dale Gibbons Flanagan Jefferies High Brown Routt, but we clearly cannot include all those names in the title of the Society. Elizabeth was an actual local person, who survived six husbands, and was eventually was run out of town by the locals. Details were provided at the luncheon by Jacque Reeves, author of an article on the subject.

John Allen, founder of the group, said he thought the name Elizabeth Dale Society had an intriguing ring to it, and sounded more interesting than “history club.” Meetings are held at noon on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at the Golden Corral buffet restaurant on University Drive west. The next topic of discussion will be Virginia Clay Clopton. Any person interested in local history may attend. Meetings are a little over an hour long.

**HMCHS to have presence with OLLI, LearningQUEST, HMCP Library**

Your Historical Society will have a presence with Osher Lifelong Learning, OLLI, (at UAH) and LearningQUEST (at the Library) in every term for the duration of the Alabama Bicentennial (2017-2019). A one-time lecture in each term will provide a window into the state’s history and an update on the Bicentennial. John Allen will provide the initial lectures, however others may be called on to assist in some of them. An ancillary benefit to the Society is that we may be able to enlist some new members. Allen has also arranged to do a series of Bicentennial lectures at the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library branches.
The Society is still searching for storage space, preferably its own permanent archive/museum. We currently have archives stored at four residential locations. Ideally, we need space to curate donated items, storage space, filing cabinets, and maybe a board-meeting room; a restroom would be nice.

A big shout-out to Reid Walker who has vowed to visit every historical marker in Huntsville and Madison County this summer.

Magnolia Trace Retirement Living will be well worth your visit to see the marvelous display on the wall of the dining room. It's called “From Cotton to the Moon, A Pictoral History of Huntsville.” The display was created by Mary Compton and Barbara Lucero. Magnolia Trace is off Memorial Parkway south at 1 Clubhouse Ave SW.

Note to members: we are seeking group photographs of previous HMCHS boards of directors. If you have any, or know of any, please notify John Allen at 256-539-5287.

Why I am a member of the Historical Society, by Sam Tumminello, is the beginning of a new feature on our website (www.hmchs.org). Sam says he is a “techno-historian” and especially likes history in photographs. He says he was encouraged to get involved in photographing history by none other than James Record, former president of the Society and county commissioner. Read more of Sam’s essay at our website. If you would like to submit a short essay on why you are a member of the Historical Society, contact John Allen at jha@knology.net.

The new Huntsville Jewish Heritage Center has opened in the Temple B’nai Sholom at 103 Lincoln St. The Center, spearheaded by Margaret Anne Goldsmith, held its dedication in April to a packed house. The Center traces the Jewish community in North Alabama back to the early days of Alabama’s statehood. Visitors to the museum can learn the area’s Jewish story with an educational video and displays of many historic artifacts both local and international. The Huntsville Jewish congregation B’nai Sholom (Sons of Peace) was founded in 1876 by 32 families. By 1898 construction of the Temple began and it was dedicated on Nov. 26, 1899. It is the oldest synagogue in continuous use in Alabama. For more information, contact the Temple office at 256-536-4771.

The Society now has a “relationship” with all area history teachers

For the first time in the Society’s 66-year history, it now has a supportive relationship with all area schools. As of late March, every social studies and history teacher in this area should have received a 5x8 information card about HOPE, or History Outreach Program for Educators. The card explains how 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. You too can check it out at: www hmchs org hope

Thanks to the HOPE committee of Deane Dayton, Arley McCormick, and Kelly Hamlin. For more information, contact Kelly at kelly.fisk.hamlin@gmail.com

Photo by John Allen

HMCHS president John Allen participated in a two-day tombstone restoration workshop in April at Glenwood Cemetery on Hall Street. It was sponsored by the Historic Huntsville Foundation and the Huntsville Green Team.
World War I Centennial Note – Madison County Courthouse Entrance Foyer, Left Side


Long-time HMCHS board member and Huntsville native Bob Adams died April 18 following an illness for the past year. He was 83. Following his graduation from Auburn with a degree in Agriculture, he worked for several companies before taking a job with his life-long friend, Guy Spencer. And by the time he retired, Bob had become executive vice president and chief operating office of the Spencer Companies. Bob also served more than 25 years in the Alabama National Guard, retiring with the rank of colonel. He was preceded in death by his wife of 54 years, Eugenia Adams. He is survived by three children and a sister.

Your biannual Historical Review is due out soon with these articles:

1. A Technical Perspective of Huntsville’s First 150 Years; Part II, by Raymond Watson
2. Alabama’s Six Constitutions; Part II, by Julian D. Butler
3. The Proslavery Ideology of Four Southern Presbyterians, by Jake Nelson (2016 Dr. John Rison Jones Award for Southern History)
4. John Hunt, Huntsville’s First Citizen, by David Byers
5. Emblems of Woe: How The South Reacted To Lincoln’s Murder, by David Hardin
6. Our Doughboys, Part I of III, Prelude to WWI; By Arley McCormick
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Preserving the Past to Enrich the Future

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John Allen, president; Wayne Smith, treasurer; Sharon Lang, recording secretary; Arley McCormick, editor
Historical Review; Jacque Reeves, past president/vice president; David Byers, corresponding secretary/past
president; Ron Bledsoe, past president/vice president; Deane Dayton, archivist; Sam Tumminello, Facebook;
Carol Codori, David Hitt, board members; Joyce Smith and Gary Wicks, past presidents.

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