

Why I am a Member of the Historical Society

by David Hitt

Despite growing up as a specimen of one of the rarest of beasts, *Huntsvillus Nativus*, I reached adulthood knowing shockingly and shamefully little of the history of my hometown. I had moved away to attend college, spent a decade of my life living in Mississippi, and, upon returning to Huntsville to work at Marshall Space Flight Center, I eagerly embraced the “Rocket City” portion of Huntsville’s past, while still remaining largely ignorant of most anything before, say, the launch of the first American satellite in 1958. (“Jupiter-C Puts Up Moon,” the giant top headline of The Huntsville Times gleefully exclaimed the next day.)

And then, somewhere along the way, something changed. I began leading tours at Huntsville’s Historic Depot museum, sharing with visitors stories about things like the occupation of Huntsville by Union forces during the Civil War. That led to becoming involved with the Huntsville Ghost Walk, stopping, amidst the harrowing hauntings, in Big Spring Park to explain about men named John Hunt and Leroy Pope and how this city came to be. I portrayed Turner Mayes in the Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll, recounting his time as a mill worker in Huntsville before shipping off for the Great War. On the Alabama Constitution Village trolley tour, I get to regale riders with the role Madison County played in Alabama becoming a state.

Huntsville and Madison County are a community like no other, and the history of our species will always remember the part the Rocket City played in showing that the sky is, most assuredly, not the limit. But this place is rich with stories, and over the years I’ve fallen in love with them. I am a member of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society because I agree with its founders and with more than 60 years of members that our local history indeed should be shared and celebrated.

NOTE: If you would like to submit an essay on why you are a member of the Historical Society, please send it to John Allen at jha@knology.net