

Why I am a member of the Historical Society

By Sam Tumminello

This is the beginning of a new feature on the HMCHS website. 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. Here’s Sam’s essay:

Membership in the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society affords me an opportunity to share some local history I’ve recorded. Several of my photographs appear in various history publications and on-line history resources. I enjoy learning and appreciating Huntsville’s varied history and HMCHS is my main source of material.

I consider myself a “techno-historian.” I record history using a still or video camera or an audio recorder and have acquired nice collection. Some is available on-line.

Years ago when former Chairman of the Madison County Commission, James Record, learned of my interest in photographing local events and subjects, he, a noted historian, encouraged me to continue my efforts. I often think of this when I’m working a project. He even used some of my photographs in his history books.

I had the privilege to learn World History at UAHuntsville from professor Dr. Frances Roberts. I particularly enjoyed her public lectures on early Huntsville history. One of my videos, now lodged in the Main Library archives, features her on a panel, along with Dorothy Johnson and John Rison Jones, discussing their work on the book “Maple Hill Cemetery Phase One.”

Then there was the stalwart Ranee Pruitt who, like James Record, encouraged me to continue to record our history. She would sometimes “offer” me photographic assignments. I was happy to oblige. The last project I worked for her was to photo-document “Beaty Spring” (now Branham Spring) for her Camp Beaty project; that’s when I found and photographed the actual flowing-water spring.

It was she who insisted I become a Board member of HMCHS, and who refused Ranee?

William Falkner said, “History is not ‘was’ it’s ‘is.’” And, someone is always needed to record it, and I’m glad to help.

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