



ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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76th Annual Meeting | April 10-12, 2024 | Huntsville, Alabama

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Cover photo: Big Spring International Park, Huntsville. Courtesy of Huntsville/Madison County Convention & Visitors Bureau

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Founded in 1947, the Alabama Historical Association is the oldest statewide historical society in Alabama. The AHA provides opportunities for meaningful engagement with the past through publications, meetings, historical markers, and other programs. The AHA is a volunteer-led and membership-supported organization. Our members are from every walk of life but share a common interest in Alabama history and a belief in its value for society today. Visit www.alabamahistory.net for more information.



Ruth Truss

*“To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.”
Winston Churchill*

This spring we will attempt improvement as we change the typical days of the annual meeting from Thursday-Saturday to Wednesday-Friday. And if the membership does not like the

change, we will move toward perfection by changing it back! Several factors influenced this pilot schedule, including financial considerations, downtown traffic patterns, and weekend obligations for those with children and grandchildren.

What will remain unchanged, however, is an exciting and diverse program. As usual with such meetings, we are greatly beholden to a helpful and hardworking local-arrangements committee that has been enthusiastic in

assisting with all the wonderful offerings in the Huntsville area. From the Big Spring to outer space, Huntsville has so much to offer. Our tour stops are concentrated in the downtown area, with most within reasonable walking distance. We have ordered perfect weather from the Chamber of Commerce, so we expect to enjoy a fabulous experience of springtime in the city. The program committee has likewise been hard at work to provide members with options of many and varied presentations from which to choose. Our banquet speaker is Isabela Morales, award-winning author of *Happy Dreams of Liberty*. UAH is graciously sponsoring Dr. Morales’s visit, and we are excited to enjoy what promises to be a captivating presentation.

Please make plans to join us April 10-12 as we celebrate all things Huntsville and enjoy the usual fellowship and intellectual stimulation of our annual meetings.

R. Truss

Huntsville:

PRESERVING HISTORY IN AN AMERICAN BUNDESSTADT

By Ben Hoksbergen and Katie Stamps

“Huntsville is not like other Alabama towns.” In a city full of nonnatives, this is a common refrain. Huntsville truly is a unique place forged by a unique history. From its early settlement through the Space Race, Huntsville’s fortunes have been tied closely to that of the larger nation. Today, more than 70 federal entities have a presence in Huntsville, including at least nine with headquarters or major branches in the area. The strong federal presence has a significant influence on the local economy, politics, and culture. In a nod to Huntsville’s German connection, the term *Bundesstadt*, or “federal city” is used here to recognize Huntsville’s distinctive role. None of Huntsville’s other sobriquets—Rocket City, Pentagon of the South—fully capture the scope of federal activity there and how it shapes the cultural fabric that makes the city special.

The federal presence has shaped not only Huntsville’s history, but the telling and preservation of that history. The influx of educated professionals, beginning in the mid-century with the growth of the Army missile programs, brought new perspectives and curiosity about the local history. Requirements of an educated workforce resulted in the establishment of new local programs of higher learning. Federal preservation programs documented and preserved historic properties across wide swaths of the local landscape and influenced local preservation initiatives. At the same time, the expanding workforce and influx of capital led to urban renewal and rapid residential and commercial development that impacted much of the historic landscape.

It was not always thus. For most of the nineteenth century, the federal government played only a peripheral role in North Alabama, with two major exceptions. During the early nineteenth century, the federal government led negotiations with representatives of Native American tribes who called the Middle Tennessee Valley home. Attempts by the government to stem the tide of Euro-American frontier squatters encroaching on Cherokee and Chickasaw

land were ultimately fruitless, and beginning in 1805, the region’s Native American population was swiftly forced to cede lands to the federal and territorial governments. The initial cession was a 345,000-acre wedge stretching from Hobbs Island to the Tennessee state line comprising the original Madison County. The parceling and sale of this land by the General Land Office marked the first great tragedy of historic preservation in the Middle Tennessee Valley, as vestiges of over 13,000 years of Native American occupation were systematically carved up and plowed under.

Foremost among the carvers and plowers was a cadre of wealthy planters who moved *en masse* to North Alabama from around the Broad River Valley of Northeast Georgia. The Broad River Group, as they became known, arrived a ready-made aristocracy and swiftly incorporated themselves into the political and financial infrastructure of the Territory. LeRoy Pope, a prominent member of the group, platted a town around the Big Spring which had been the site of one the earliest frontier homesteads built by squatter John Hunt. Pope named his town Twickenham, but due to resistance against these wealthy interlopers, a majority of the settlers in the area had the name of the town changed to Huntsville. Pope established the Planters and Merchants Bank in Huntsville and helped get his son-in-law, John W. Walker, elected to the territorial legislature. Walker lobbied to have Huntsville selected as a territorial capital and presided over the first Alabama Constitutional Convention there in July of 1819. For the next four decades, the politics of North Alabama turned local as the planter class strove to retain their hold on wealth and power.

The federal government again made a dramatic arrival in the Middle Tennessee Valley on April 11, 1862, when an advance guard under the command of Brigadier General Ormsby M. Mitchel marched into Huntsville to secure it for the Union. Federal troops occupied the city for most of the remainder of the war. The occupation



Members of the Union IV Corps occupying the Lanford-McCalley Mansion in Huntsville, 1865. Courtesy of the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Special Collections

was a mixed bag in terms of historic preservation. Most of the pre-war records of Madison County were spared, having been carted to Blountsville for safekeeping before the invasion. Many of the stately homes in Huntsville and several of the plantation mansions in the immediate vicinity were coopted by Union officers and thus escaped destruction. Nonetheless, the Union occupation of north Alabama inspired a protracted guerilla insurgency that was met with harsh retribution by Federal forces. Many houses in the surrounding countryside were put to the torch as punishment for suspected aid to Confederate bushwhackers.

The years following the Civil War saw a continuation of plantation agrarianism in the Tennessee Valley. Industrialization made slow inroads within the constraints of the plantation economy. The planters had dominated much of the early industry because they already owned mills and forges for the maintenance of their own operations, but by the 1870s, new faces could be seen among the local business elite as successful merchants, physicians, and other professionals raised enough capital to expand into new enterprises. Even a few local freedmen, such as builders Henderson Brandon and his son Daniel, were able to establish successful businesses. Out of this more diverse economic elite rose a new investor class that was eager to pursue new sources of capital investment.

In the early 1880s, appeals from the business boosters began to pay off as outside investors looked toward Huntsville, with its ample labor pool and abundant potential for water power, as a place of untapped economic opportunity. Among the first to take the gamble

were Michael O'Shaughnessy and his brother James, who had established a successful commission house and cottonseed oil mill in Nashville and expanded their operations into Huntsville in 1881 with the Huntsville Cotton Oil Mills. The O'Shaughnessys teamed up with several local business leaders to organize the North Alabama Improvement Company to promote economic development in the city. One of the first initiatives of this group was construction of the luxurious Monte Sano Hotel on the mountain above the city to attract wealthy businessmen who might invest in the area.



Monte Sano Hotel. Courtesy of the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Special Collections

The Improvement Company's boosterism bore fruit in 1890 when Trevor B. Dallas of Nashville announced that he would locate his new textile mill in Huntsville. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Huntsville was home to five cotton mills. Some of the mills established extensive communities for their employees, complete with schools, sports fields, and theaters. Streetcar lines were constructed to connect the largest mills—Dallas Manufacturing, Lincoln Mills, and Merrimack Manufacturing—to the downtown Huntsville shopping



Historic postcard of Merrimack Cotton Mill.

district. The resulting suburban growth consumed several of the former plantations that had been established in Huntsville's immediate orbit.

Although the mills provided many jobs for unskilled laborers from the surrounding area, poverty remained widespread in the Tennessee Valley. Tenancy throughout the countryside expanded dramatically between 1890 and 1930, but farm size declined during the same period. An overreliance on cotton production led to depletion of soils and exacerbated rural poverty as cotton prices fell precipitously following a peak in demand during World War I.

These problems spurred federal investment in a hydroelectric dam at Muscle Shoals that became a model for federal economic improvement programs in the Tennessee Valley during the Great Depression. In 1933, Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act, creating the agency tasked with modernizing the Tennessee Valley and improving economic conditions there. The TVA's ambitious plans for hydroelectric power and flood control soon arrived at Huntsville's doorstep. Construction of Wheeler Dam began in 1933. Prior to inundation, TVA agents visited rural homes along the Tennessee River floodplain in Madison County and collected detailed information on everything from toilet facilities to the religious preferences of the residents, preserving a rich record of rural life in north Alabama in the 1930s. TVA surveyors also made detailed maps of the farms and documented cemeteries near the floodplain, mapping graves and transcribing markers. At the urging of archaeologists William S. Webb and David L. DeJarnette, TVA

also sponsored archaeological excavations of major archaeological sites in the Wheeler Basin, relying on manpower from another of Roosevelt's New Deal agencies, the Works Progress Administration. In all TVA/WPA documented 237 archaeological sites in the Wheeler Basin, excavating 19 of the more prominent Native American mounds and shell middens. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the sites were left unexcavated, and these and an untold number of undocumented lesser sites were destroyed when the Wheeler Dam floodgates were finally closed in 1936.

Another New Deal program, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), was established by the National Park Service in 1933 to create jobs for architects, draftsmen, and photographers. Surveyors for HABS documented 78 historic structures around Huntsville, including several that are no longer standing.



Former housing for enslaved workers at the David Wade plantation, North Huntsville in 1935. Courtesy of Library of Congress, Historic American Building Survey



Group photo of the WPA archaeological work crew on Hobbs Island. Courtesy of The University of Tennessee McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture

Following the Great Depression, a new generation of investors and business boosters arose in Huntsville. Working closely with veteran U.S. senator J. Lister Hill and junior U.S. congressman John J. Sparkman, they seized on interest from the U.S. Army in establishing a new chemical manufacturing and storage facility as part of military mobilization in response to growing threats in Europe and Asia. On June 8, 1941, two Huntsville businessmen, George Mahoney and Lawrence Goldsmith, met with an inspector from the Army to visit potential sites. Within a month, the Chemical Warfare Service announced that they had selected a site on the southwest edge of Huntsville as a new chemical munitions manufacturing and storage plant. The original plans were ultimately expanded to include a conventional munitions manufacturing plant, a storage

and shipping depot, and two railroad connections. By the end of 1942, the Army had acquired more than 32,500 acres of private land, displacing around 600 rural households, about half of whom were African American residents of the unincorporated rural communities of Pond Beat and Mullins Flat. All but a handful of the more well-built homes were dismantled or razed. The Army surveyed several historic cemeteries across the installation, but little other documentation of the former landscape survived.

The new installation was comprised of three separate but adjacent entities: the Huntsville Arsenal, the Redstone Ordnance Plant, and the Huntsville Chemical Warfare Depot. At the height of World War II, some 11,000 people were employed on the installation. Following the Japanese surrender, however, production facilities were put on standby, and by 1947, the installation was declared surplus. The installation was advertised for sale, but before it made it to the auction block, the Army Chief of Ordnance designated it the new headquarters for the Army Ordnance Rocket Center. The installation was consolidated into a single entity dubbed Redstone Arsenal, and in April 1950, 500 military personnel were transferred there from Fort Bliss, Texas, along with 120 civil service employees and 130 German contract employees who had been smuggled out of Germany in Operation Paperclip.

The new arrivals were tasked with developing tactical ballistic missiles. By 1953, the team had achieved its goal, with the first launch of the PGM-11 Redstone rocket based on the German V-2 designed and produced for Nazi Germany under the direction of Wernher von Braun, who now directed operations at the Ordnance Guided Missile Center at Redstone. In 1956, the center was reorganized as the Army Ballistic Missile Agency.

After the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik 1* in 1957, von Braun's team was given the greenlight to modify their Jupiter C rocket to carry an artificial satellite into orbit. After the successful launch of the *Explorer 1* satellite in February of 1958, the von Braun team's star began to rise. On July 29, 1959, President Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act and in October of that year transferred all Army space-related activities to the new agency. In July 1960, 1,840 acres in the heart of Redstone Arsenal were transferred to NASA to become the George C. Marshall Space Flight Center, with von Braun appointed director.

Von Braun and many members of his team had been members of the German aristocracy and were accustomed to more cultural refinements than what Huntsville had to offer in the 1950s. The Germans began

Werner von Braun's 1957 ABMA security badge.



Von Braun's office in Building 4488 on Redstone Arsenal. Through an agreement with the Alabama Historical Commission, the Army maintains the office in its 1960s condition. Courtesy of the Garrison-Redstone Arsenal Environmental Management Division

patronizing the local arts and helped grow the fledgling Huntsville Symphony. Some advised the City of Huntsville on how to become more "modern." Hannes Luehrsen, an architect and planner for the rocket team, designed the Memorial Parkway bypassing downtown Huntsville, and von Braun urged city leaders to clean up some of the low-income neighborhoods that had sprung up around the mill villages. The booster class of Huntsville was eager to comply.

The urban renewal was swift. Aided by the strong federal presence and the intercessions of the now Senator Sparkman, funding was plentiful. Whole

neighborhoods were razed, and their residents were channeled into new public housing. Huntsville's neo-classical 1914 courthouse was replaced in 1967 by the current modernist structure, and the historic Cotton Row on the west side of the city square, once the financial center of the local cotton industry, was demolished. Huntsville was rebranded the "Rocket City."

Simultaneously, the business boosters were becoming more organized. Around 100 business owners formed the Huntsville Industrial Expansion Committee (HEIC) in 1944 to recruit new industries to Huntsville. They focused much of their attention on the area north of Redstone Arsenal, which was still a collection of small farms and old plantations. Several members of the HEIC incorporated the Huntsville Industrial Sites (HIS) to buy up the farmland and redevelop it as industrial properties. It did not take long for defense contractors such as Brown Engineering, IBM, and Northrop to seize on the prime location. In 1962, the City rezoned the area as a Research Park, and HIS was reorganized as the nonprofit Research Sites Foundation (RSF).

Requiring a charitable cause for their nonprofit, the RSF seized on the simultaneous efforts by von Braun to establish a local research institute to train his staff. In 1963, von Braun's research institute was combined with the University Center, a local University of Alabama extension, to establish the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). Transferred along with other faculty from the UA Huntsville Center, historian Frances Roberts was among the first generation of faculty at UAH. Her seminal work on North Alabama history, including her dissertation on the formative period in the Tennessee Valley, brought a new level of professionalism to north Alabama history.

The increasing skilled workforce employed by the Army, NASA, and defense contractors further transformed the local culture through increased engagement with civic groups dedicated to a variety of interests, including archaeology, history, and historic preservation. The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society (HMCHS) was founded in 1951 and began publishing *The Huntsville Historical Review* in 1971. Written by local researchers and writers, this publication showcases the eventful history of Madison County through a variety of topics and perspectives. During the Alabama Bicentennial celebration in 2019, the HMCHS promoted the repair of historic markers throughout Madison County and developed a digital marker trail using QR codes. In 1956, the Madison County Chapter of the Alabama Archaeological Society was chartered, with founding members including many who worked on

Redstone Arsenal such as James Farrior, who worked for the von Braun team, and Ed Mahan, who worked for the Post Engineers. Mahan was instrumental in bringing North Alabama Paleoindian sites and rockshelters to the attention of David DeJarnette of the University of Alabama. Many enlisted personnel spent their days off exploring the abundant caves throughout the area and were the first to report several archeologically significant caves. In 1955, the Huntsville Grotto of the National Speleological Society (NSS) was formed, and in 1971, the NSS headquarters was moved to Huntsville.

*Oakendale
Plantation Site
on Redstone
Arsenal.
Courtesy of
Marty Sellers/
Geotechnical
Testing &
Environmental
Consultants*



Out of concern for the threats from urban renewal projects to the historic landscape, the Historic Huntsville Foundation (HHF) was founded in 1974 to promote historic preservation and restoration, with a focus on Huntsville's downtown and the historic Twickenham neighborhood. In 1983, HHF purchased the historic Harrison Brothers Hardware store on the courthouse square from Harrison family heirs to preserve and continue the operation and legacy of this iconic business. A decade later, HHF increased its investment in downtown Huntsville with the purchase of the adjoining Hundley Building, restoring its façade and renovating the interior. Renamed the Harvie Jones Building after Huntsville's foremost preservation architect, the structure is home to two local businesses. HHF continues to support the preservation of local history with the development of the Historic Huntsville Museum at Harrison Brothers Hardware, newly listed to the National Park Service's Reconstruction Era National Historic Network.

The 1966 passage of the National Historic Preservation Act proved particularly significant in a community with such a strong federal presence. Huntsville citizens were swift to take advantage of the new law, nominating the nineteenth-century Twickenham neighborhood as Huntsville's first historic district in 1972. The predominantly Victorian-era Old Town Historic District was designated in 1974, and Five Points, Huntsville's first true "suburb," was designated in 1999. In 1978, the Huntsville Planning Commission

sponsored a survey of historic buildings around the city, listing 44 structures on the National Register. Today, the city of Huntsville has ten historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places, with four districts locally designated under design review by the Huntsville Historic Preservation Commission.

The Army began implementing its historic preservation regulations at Redstone Arsenal in 1978, with its first archaeological survey conducted by archaeologist Lawrence Alexander of the UA Office of Archaeological Research. Since that time, 1,001 archaeological sites have been recorded on the installation, nearly all of which continue to be preserved. The first historic architecture survey was conducted on Redstone in 1998 and documented and evaluated surviving structures from the World War II era. Marshall Space Flight Center sponsored a historic properties survey of its facilities in 1983, ultimately listing three structures associated with the Apollo space program on the National Register of Historic Places.

The influence of the federal government in Huntsville led to an immense population boom in the mid-twentieth century and the establishment of numerous residential neighborhoods now reaching the age of consideration for historical significance. In 2014, HHF encouraged the city of Huntsville to identify McThornmor Acres, located near UAH, as Huntsville's first "Space Race" historic district to be surveyed and listed to the NRHP in 2022. Using Certified Local Grant funding from the Alabama Historical Commission, the City conducted eight historic resource surveys of mid-twentieth century neighborhoods and listed two districts to the NRHP. Edmonton Heights, listed in 2021, is a historically Black residential neighborhood located near Alabama A&M University. Platted in 1959, Edmonton Heights was advertised directly to Black residents as an alternative to public housing during a time when their neighborhoods were being demolished by the city's urban renewal program. On the night of March 19, 1962, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his top aide, Reverend Ralph Abernathy, spent the night at the Edmonton Heights home of Reverend Ezekiel Bell, at 101 Whitney Avenue, during their visit to Huntsville for two speeches at First Baptist Church of Church Street and Oakwood College (now University). The research and listing of Edmonton Heights on the NRHP led to ongoing surveys in the historically Black residential neighborhoods of Magnolia Terrace and Terry Heights.

In the tradition of Lister Hill and John Sparkman, Senator Richard Shelby was instrumental in recent years in securing federal investment in Huntsville.

*Courtesy
of Katie
Stamps*



This included the FBI Terrorist Explosive Devices Analytical Center at Redstone Arsenal and a new federal courthouse currently under construction in downtown Huntsville. Both projects were preceded by large-scale archaeological excavations to preserve history before it was destroyed. Meanwhile, Huntsville's leadership has promoted diversification of the local economy into healthcare, biotechnology, and manufacturing. The boom times continue, and with it come growing pains as residential and commercial development continues to spread across the Middle Tennessee Valley. Now more than ever, historic preservation needs to be at the forefront to continue to safeguard the rich historic landscape of Alabama's *Bundesstadt*.



Courtesy of Katie Stamps

Ben Hoksbergen is the Installation Archaeologist and Cultural Resource Manager at Redstone Arsenal. He also serves as lecturer in the Department of History at The University of Alabama in Huntsville and as president of the Alabama Archaeological Society.

Katie Stamps serves as City of Huntsville Preservation Planner and Historic Huntsville Foundation Board Member.



HUNTSVILLE REVISITED MUSEUM

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Huntsville Revisited Museum is home to a wide range of unique artifacts, photos, and stories of the places and families that make up the fabric of Huntsville. William Hampton's personal passion for collecting historical items and sharing photos and stories on Facebook reaches tens of thousands of viewers from the city and around the country and world each week and created a vision for curating unique and important artifacts for public view. The history museum is located at the H.C. Blake Art & History Center and will be open from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for our guests. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/HuntsvilleRevisited>.

Photo courtesy of William Hampton

DAVIDSON CENTER FOR SPACE EXPLORATION

1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Attendees are invited to enjoy a tour of the Davidson Center for Space Exploration with retired NASA engineers, managers, and contractors who are docent emerita with the U.S. Space & Rocket Center. After purchasing your general admission ticket (\$30) at the museum entrance, proceed to the Davidson Center entrance where AHA member and docent emeritus Gary Wicks will greet you. Docents will be on hand from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Photo courtesy of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center



STATE BLACK ARCHIVES RESEARCH CENTER AND MUSEUM AT ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY

Join interim director Veronica Henderson on a guided tour of the State Black Archives Research Center and Museum at Alabama A&M University from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Established by the state of Alabama in 1987, the SBARCM acquires, preserves, and makes available unique archival collections about Black Alabamians. This tour will include the campus of Alabama A&M University, founded in 1875 by a former slave, Dr. William Hooper Councill, and has an enrollment of 6,600 students.

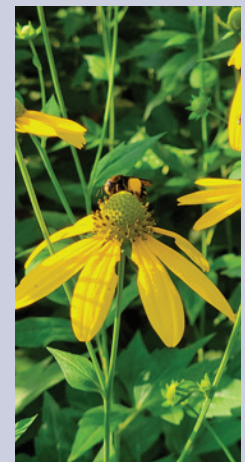
Photo courtesy of Alabama A&M University Archives and Special Collections



Opening Reception to be Held at Huntsville Botanical Garden

Join us on Wednesday, April 10 from 6 to 8 p.m. for an opening reception at the Huntsville Botanical Garden. Located on 118 acres, the Garden is filled with nature trails, diverse ecosystems, and opportunities to learn about the unique biodiversity of the region. The Native Plants Teaching Garden, for example, highlights native plants from southeastern North America, particularly emphasizing plant species endemic to the humid subtropical climate of the Highland Rim, Cumberland Plateau, Valley and Ridge, and Piedmont Upland physiographic regions of northern Alabama. The Garden is located at 4747 Bob Wallace Avenue, not far from the Marriott Hotel and Conference Center.

Photos courtesy of Huntsville Botanical Garden



EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY

Completed in 1859, Episcopal Church of the Nativity was designed in the Middle Pointed Gothic Revival style by the British architect Frank Wills. The structure was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1990 as one of the most pristine and least altered examples of Ecclesiastical Gothic architecture in the South. The building itself is built in brick and has an aisled nave-and-chancel plan, offset by a monumental bell tower and spire on the northeast corner. The interior of the church is richly decorated with vibrant stained-glass windows, carved wooden accents, sculpture, paintings, and embroidered cushions. The church has been in continuous use since its consecration, and has an average weekly attendance of over 450 active parishioners.

Photo courtesy of Katie Stamps



FIRST NATIONAL BANK

Local architect George Gilliam Steele designed the First National Bank building, which was constructed in approximately 1838. The Greek Revival style building features a limestone façade, unique interior features, and resides on a cut limestone block foundation on the bluff overlooking Big Spring Park. During the Civil War, the bank was used as a commissary for Union troops. The bank is currently owned and operated by The Broadway Group.

Photo courtesy of Katie Stamps

HARRISON BROTHERS HARDWARE

Harrison Brothers Hardware has been a fixture on Huntsville's courthouse square since 1897, offering goods to customers who have included farmers, mill workers, and rocket scientists. After Harrison Brothers heirs decided to sell the business, the Historic Huntsville Foundation purchased both the building and the business and continued the store's operation as part of their nonprofit mission. Today, the store offers an expansive selection of Alabama art and fine crafts. Further, the store is also home to the Historic Huntsville Museum, recently listed to the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network for its exhibitions that share the history of Huntsville's Black Reconstruction leaders.

Photo courtesy of Donna Castellano



ST. JOHN AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

St. John African Methodist Episcopal Church, Huntsville, was organized by Dr. William Hooper Council and others in 1885. Dr. Council was an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and also the founder (1875) and first president of Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University. The first church services were held in a barber shop on the corner of Miller and West Holmes Streets. The first church building was erected at 218 Church Street in 1900. In April 1971 the church moved into a newly erected facility at its present location, 229 Church Street. St. John is currently in the South Birmingham-Huntsville-Bessemer District of the Northwest Alabama Annual Conference of the Ninth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.



Photo courtesy of Barbara Johnson



WEEDEN HOUSE MUSEUM

The historic Weeden House was built in 1819, the same year Alabama became a state. It is one of the finest examples in the state of Federal architecture, featuring a leaded glass fanlight, cantilevered staircase and hand-carved mantles. Early residents included John McKinley, who would become Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, and Bartley Lowe, the first president of Huntsville Bank. The most famous resident to live in the house was author, illustrator, and poet Maria Howard Weeden, known as Howard, who was born in the house in 1846 and lived there until her death in 1905. Weeden became known internationally for her watercolor illustrations of formerly enslaved African Americans, and she published four books of poetry, written mostly in regional black dialect. Because of her nearsightedness, she painted with a brush containing 3 horse-hair bristles. Weeden family descendants lived in the home until 1956.

Photo courtesy of Gina James

TEMPLE B'NAI SHOLOM



Huntsville's first Jewish citizens arrived during the 1840s. Congregation B'nai Sholom ("Sons of Peace") was founded July 30, 1876 by 32 families. Construction of the Temple began in 1898, and it was dedicated on November 26, 1899. One of the oldest Reform Congregations in the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), Temple B'nai Sholom is located on the edge of the historic Twickenham District in downtown Huntsville, Alabama. The beautifully maintained historic building is the oldest synagogue in continuous use in Alabama. The architecture is primarily of Romanesque Revival style, with influences of the Renaissance Revival in the west front gable. The Temple was designed by architect R. H. Hunt of Chattanooga. Since 2017, Temple B'nai Sholom is home to the Huntsville Jewish Heritage Center, which is unique to the city's houses of worship as the only religious museum/history center. Displays at the Center highlight Jewish holidays, Jewish life cycle events, and sacred Jewish objects, symbols, and traditions.

Photos courtesy of Temple B'Nai Sholom





RESERVE YOUR HOTEL ROOM NOW!

*Huntsville Marriott at the Space and Rocket Center
5 Tranquility Base
256-830-2222*

\$159 per night

The deadline for the room block is March 10, unless the block fills sooner than the deadline.

The Huntsville Marriott at the Space and Rocket Center is the conference hotel. Reserve your room by calling the hotel and mentioning the meeting, or use the link found at www.alabamahistory.net/meetings to reserve online.

An additional block of rooms is available at the **Fairfield Inn by Marriott at the rate of \$109 per night** (1385 Enterprise Way; 256-971-0921). The cut-off date is March 19. A link to reserve online is also available on the AHA web site. The Fairfield Inn is approximately 4 miles from the Huntsville Marriott at the Space and Rocket Center.

76th MEETING OF THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2024

Pre-meeting opportunities

- 11 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** **Huntsville Revisited Museum**
- 1 – 3:00 p.m.** **Docent-Led Tours of U.S. Space and Rocket Center**
(Arrive anytime between 1 and 2:30 p.m.)
- 2 – 4:00 p.m.** **Tour of State Black Archives and Alabama A&M University**
(Group tour begins at 2:00 p.m.)
- 6:00 p.m.** **Opening Reception**
Huntsville Botanical Garden
4747 Bob Wallace Drive

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2024

- 8:00 a.m.** **Registration, Coffee, Book Sales, Exhibitors**
- 9:00 a.m.** **General Session**
- 10:45 a.m.** **Concurrent Sessions**
- Session A**
- “Lessons Learned from Mapping Black Towns in Alabama”
Justin Rudder, Alabama Department of Archives and History
 - “Huntsville’s Virginia Clay, a Compelling Presence Here and in Washington before the Civil War up to Women’s Suffrage”
John H. Allen, Huntsville
 - “The Wade Hall Postcard Collection: Teaching History with Postcards”
Ruth Elder, Troy University
- Session B**
- “Matchmakers, Socialites, and Reformers: New (Jewish) Women and the Making of Birmingham, Alabama, 1882-1906”
Melissa Young, Birmingham
 - “Merchants and Mill Workers: Harrison Brothers and Huntsville Commerce, 1897-1903”
Merritt Fisk, University of Alabama in Huntsville
 - “From Enslavement to Entrepreneur: The Legacy of Henderson and Daniel Brandon”
Donna Castellano, The Historic Huntsville Foundation
- Session C**
- “Magic City: How the Birmingham Jazz Tradition Shaped the Sound of America”
Burgin Mathews, Southern Music Research Center
 - “Being Young, Being Lovely, Being an Object: Zelda Fitzgerald’s Figural Artworks”
Lizzie Orlofsky, Alabama Department of Archives and History

- “Behold! The Drama’s Temple Rise:’ Building Huntsville’s First Theaters”
Laura Keigan, The Historic Huntsville Foundation

Session D

- “Rewriting Local Spanish-American War History: Methodology and Outcomes in Deconstructing and Rebuilding Archival Knowledge”
Cait Monroe, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library
- “Remembering the Fallen: The Impact of the Bay of Pigs on Families’ Lives and Collective Memory”
Alyssa Allen, University of Alabama
- “The Good Fight: Senator James B. Allen’s Role in the Debates to Return the Panama Canal”
Lori Owens, Jacksonville State University

Session E

- “Preserving Alabama’s Rosenwald Schools”
Sam Christensen, Alabama Department of Archives and History
- “Pursuing Narrative Remediation using Archival Records: The Typhoid Epidemic at Athens Female College”
Laken Smith and Amber Skantz, Athens State University

Noon

Box Lunches

1 – 5 p.m.

Tours On-Your-Own

- **Temple B’nai Shalom**
- **St. John AME Church**
- **Weeden House Museum and Garden**
- **First National Bank**
- **The Episcopal Church of the Nativity**
- **Harrison Brothers Hardware**
- **Twickenham Historic District**

6:00 p.m.

Cash Bar

7:00 p.m.

Annual Awards Banquet

FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2024

8:00 a.m.

Registration, Coffee, Book Sales, Exhibitors

8:30 a.m.

Concurrent Sessions

- Alabama History in the Classroom
Marty Olliff, Troy University Dothan, moderator
Hayden McDaniel, Alabama Department of Archives and History
Amber Broadhead, Edgewood Elementary School
Idrissa Snyder, Alabama Humanities Alliance
- Preserving and Interpreting Huntsville’s Black History
Katie Stamps, City of Huntsville
William Hampton, Huntsville Revisited Museum

- Historical Collections in the Rocket City
Keri Hallford, Alabama Department of Archives and History, moderator
Veronica Henderson, State Black Archives, Research Center, and Museum
Reagan Grimsley, Special Collections, University of Alabama Huntsville
Heather Adkins, Huntsville-Madison County Special Collections
Jordan Whetstone, Marshall Space Flight Center Archives

- Artemis Missions and the Making of Space Flight History
NASA Marshall Speakers Bureau Guest
Gary Wicks, Huntsville

9:45 a.m. Business Session

10:30 a.m. Concurrent Sessions

Session A

- “Building a City in the Wilderness: Schools for Alabama Power Company Construction Camps”
Marietta Monaghan, Kennesaw State University
- “A Tale of Two Rockets: Public History Silence in Alabama”
Jerald Perlman, Huntsville
- “Farley Berman: The Man, The Myth, and The Museum”
Sabra Gossett and Aimee Grey, Berman Museum, Anniston Museum and Gardens

Session B

- “Liberal in a Different Way: Race, Liberalism, and Contingency in the Alabama Election of 1946”
Sam Badger, University of Alabama
- “Alabama’s Reverse Freedom Rides: White Citizens’ Councils and Forced Migration in 1962”
Allie Lopez, Baylor University
- “The March Continues: Alabamians and the 1980’s Fight to Renew the Voting Rights Act”
Scotty Kirkland, Alabama Department of Archives and History

Session C

- “From Generation to Generation: Huntsville and the Jewish Community”
Rabbi P. J. Schwartz, Temple B’nai Shalom
- “Your Life Will Be Beautiful in Edmonton Heights”
Caroline Swope, Kingstree Studios
- “The Smoke of Progress: The Housing Authority of Huntsville”
John O’Brien, Madison

Session D

- “The Forgotten Sister: The Surprising Existence of the Tuskegee Herald”
Judith Sheppard, Auburn University
- “‘Notorious Scalawag’ or Visionary Martyr: The Story of William Burleigh Jones”
Louise Jones McPhillips, Birmingham
- “Keeping Up With the Joneses: Tracking the Lives and Legacies of Two Reconstruction Era Legislators From Madison County”
Ben Hoksbergen, University of Alabama in Huntsville
Jane DeNeefe, Huntsville

Noon Buffett Luncheon
Grand Ballroom
Presidential Address by Dr. Ruth Truss

1:30 p.m. Adjourn

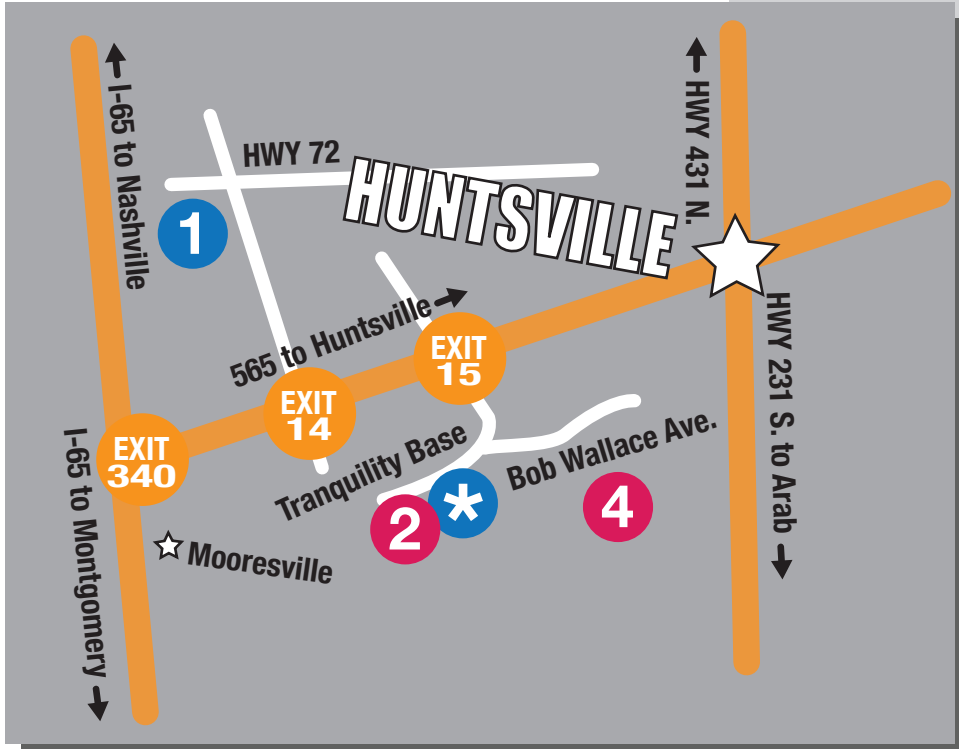
*** Huntsville Marriott at the Space & Rocket Center (Conference Hotel)**

5 Tranquility Base • (256) 830-2222
 \$159/Night | LIMITED BLOCK | Deadline March 10

Additional Hotel Option:

1 Fairfield Inn Huntsville

1385 Enterprise Way • (256) 971-0921
 Deadline March 19 | www.alabamahistory.net/meetings



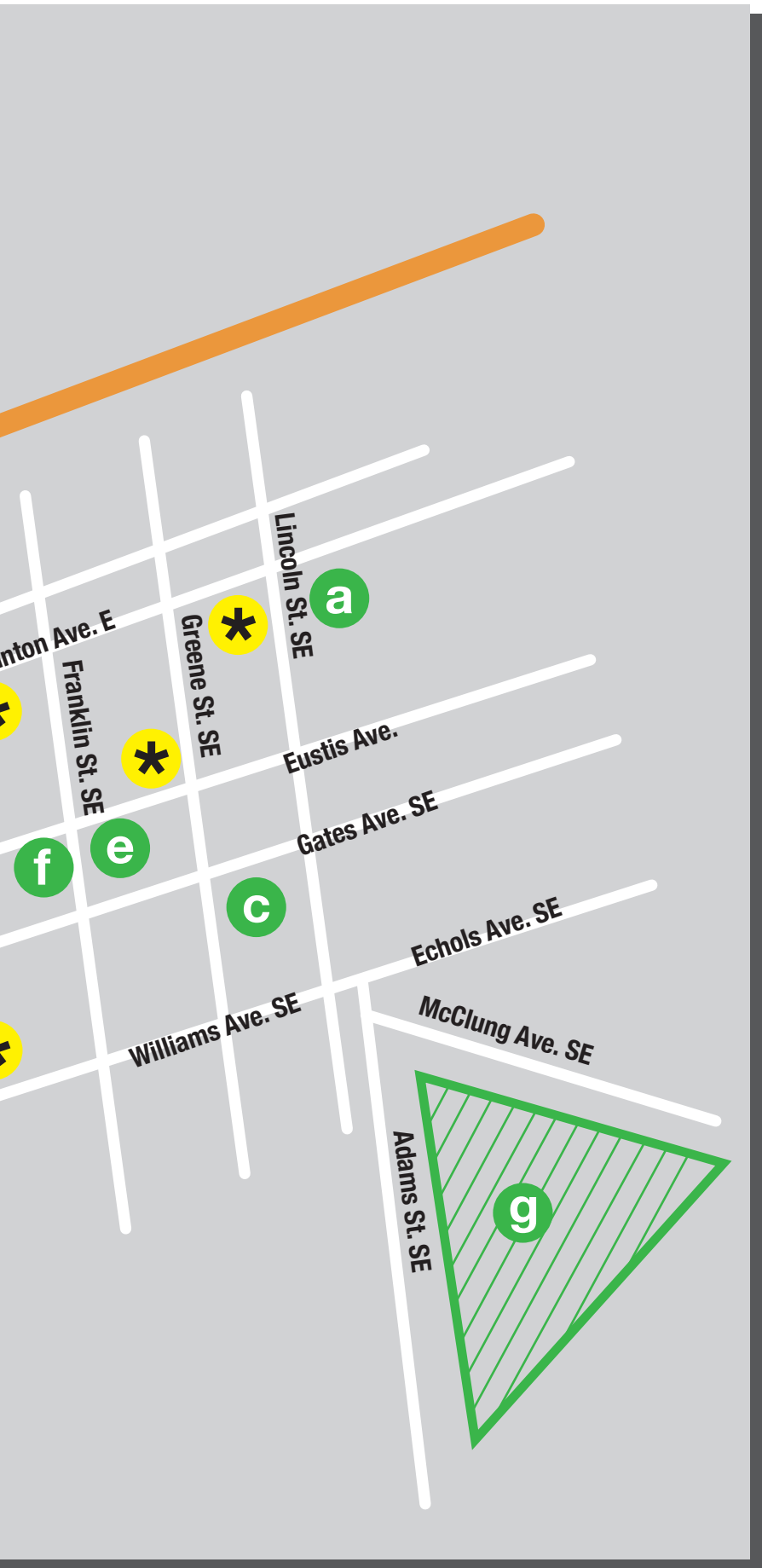
Wednesday, April 10:

1 Huntsville Revisited Museum at the H.C. Blake Art & History Center
 2007 North Memorial Parkway

2 U.S. Space and Rocket Center
 1 Tranquility Base

3 State Black Archives and Alabama A&M University
 4900 Meridian Street, North

4 RECEPTION:
 Huntsville Botanical Garden
 4747 Bob Wallace Avenue




Thursday, April 11:

- a** Temple B'nai Shalom
103 Lincoln Street Southeast
- b** St. John AME Church
229 Church Street
- c** Weeden House Museum and Garden
300 Gates Avenue Southeast
- d** First National Bank
West Side Square
- e** The Episcopal Church of the Nativity
208 Eustis Avenue Southeast
- f** Harrison Brothers Hardware
124 Southside Square

g Twickenham Historic District

*** Parking**



Scan this QR Code for the City of Huntsville Parking Locator Map



AHA

Be on the lookout for the red and white AHA signs!

Scan this QR code for access to the Google Map.



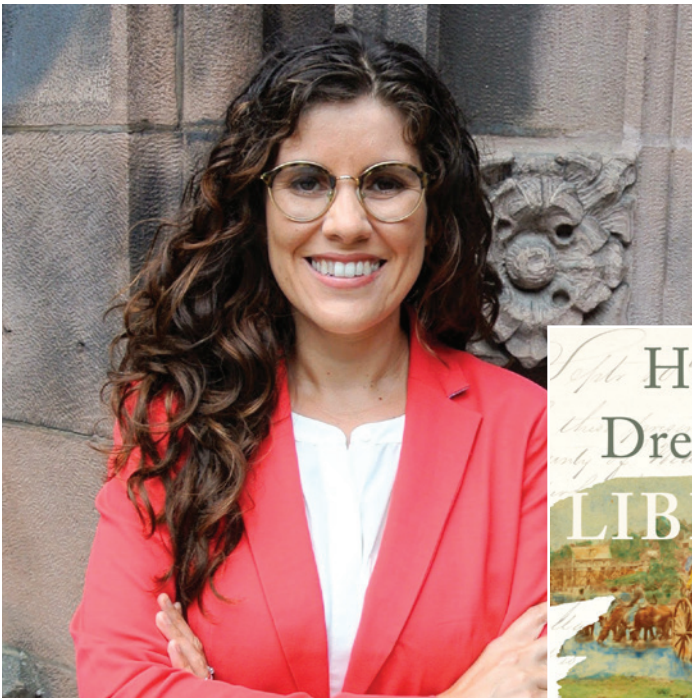
Please don't rely on the scale of this map for navigation.

ARCHIVIST HEATHER ADKINS TO DISCUSS “THE COMPLEX CITY: STORIES OF IRONY AND GROWTH FROM HUNTSVILLE HISTORY.”

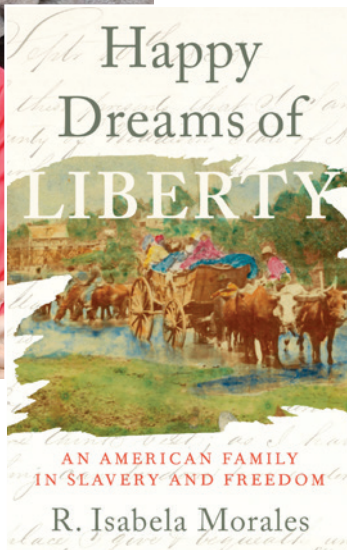
Heather Adkins is a Certified Archivist and has an M.A. in Public History with a concentration in archives management from Middle Tennessee State University. She has worked in the archives field for fourteen years in various academic, non-profit, and government institutions, including the Tennessee State Library & Archives. She moved to Huntsville in 2018 to take on the role of Manager of Special Collections for the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library system. Heather enjoys creating new ways to showcase the department’s historical collections and rare books. Heather has also participated in several local history organizations, including the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, for which she currently serves as president. In that role, she strives to facilitate dynamic programming, as well as devise projects that create deeper connections to history within the community. ▶



AWARD-WINNING HISTORIAN R. ISABELA MORALES TO PROVIDE BANQUET KEYNOTE



R. Isabela Morales is an award-winning author and public historian. Her first book, *Happy Dreams of Liberty: An American Family in Slavery and Freedom*, received the 2023 Tom Watson Brown Book Award, the 2023 Shapiro Book Prize, the 2023 William Nelson Cromwell Foundation Book Prize, and is a finalist for the Gilder Lehrman Center’s prestigious Frederick Douglass Book Prize.



Dr. Morales is the Education and Exhibit Manager at the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum, Central New Jersey’s first dedicated Black history museum, as well as the Editor of Princeton University’s expansive public history initiative, *The Princeton & Slavery Project*. She received her Ph.D. in history from Princeton University and a B.A. in history and American Studies from the University of Alabama, where she first began the research that would become *Happy Dreams of Liberty*. ◀



Baskin marker dedication photo courtesy of Alabama Department of Archives and History

ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION HISTORICAL MARKERS IN 2023

Text and locations of the markers ordered by the Association in 2023 will appear in a forthcoming issue of The Alabama Review. Markers below followed by an asterisk have been installed.

- Inez Baskin (Montgomery County) *
- Bell Street Baptist Church (Montgomery County)
- Engagement at Little Bear Creek (Colbert County)
- First Congregational Christian Church (Montgomery County)
- Frank King / Tennessee Valley Historical Society (Colbert County) *
- Greater Nazarene Missionary Baptist Church (Conecuh County)
- Lowe Mill / General Shoe Company (Madison County)
- Paint Rock Valley School (Jackson County)
- Victor Tulane (Montgomery County)
- Youngsville Methodist Church (Tallapoosa County)

The following markers were also ordered last year, concluding the Association's 2021 History Revealed project, which funded markers on underrepresented topics.

- The Enslaved at Old Elyton (Jefferson County)
- Green Valley Missionary Baptist Church (Henry County)
- The Florence Mound (Lauderdale County)
- Parker-Hayes Boarding House (Morgan County)
- Lowndesboro School (Lowndes County)
- United States Colored Troops at Blakeley (Baldwin County)



McThornmor Acres marker dedication photo courtesy of Historic Huntsville Foundation.

ALABAMA
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION



c/o Caroline Marshall
Draughton Center for the
Arts & Humanities
Pebble Hill
Auburn, AL 36849
www.alabamahistory.net

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SAVE THE DATE!

Fall Pilgrimage
October 11-12, 2024
Phenix City, Alabama

Image courtesy of Melissa Gauntt

