

Stories Behind the Names  
of 250 Places  
in Madison County and Huntsville, Alabama

# Why Is It Named That?



by Dex Nilsson



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Twinbrook Communications  
Huntsville, Alabama

**WHY IS IT NAMED THAT?**  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

About This Book .....	4
About the Author .....	6
Acknowledgments .....	7
1. The Beginning of Madison County and Huntsville .....	9
2. Cities and Communities .....	12
3. Mountains and Streams .....	21
4. County Roads .....	26
5. In and Around Madison .....	31
6. Downtown Huntsville Streets .....	35
7. Avenues in Huntsville's Five Points District .....	45
8. More Huntsville Streets .....	52
Photographs .....	65-68
9. Parks and Recreation Areas .....	69
10. Buildings .....	73
11. Libraries .....	83
12. Colleges and Universities .....	85
13. High Schools .....	93
14. At Redstone Arsenal .....	97
15. More Places of Interest .....	104
16. Still More Names .....	115
Bibliography .....	117
Some Corrections and Comments .....	122
Index .....	124

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

Names of places bother me, especially places named after people. I can't help wondering who those people were. If it's a building, I'll go in and ask, "Why is it named that?" - and time after time, no one knows! If it's a street, I've been known to ask fellow walkers. And they don't know! Maybe no one else cares. But I'll bet you are as curious as I am.

This little book is the result of my curiosity. As far as I can tell, nothing like it has been compiled here before.

I had to set some rules for the book. It's not a formal history, although it contains a lot of history. Emphasis is, as its title implies, on how places got their names. I've tried to make each write-up short, lively, and entertaining. I've included only those places that exist today. As to streets and roads, I've tried to include the well traveled ones. I'm guessing that there are over 2,000 in the county and cities, and if your favorite isn't here, it's likely because there isn't room. I have purposely excluded the area's fine homes, although they are known by their owners' names, because they are well documented elsewhere. I left out company names too. Their success stories - from Albert's Flowers to Wilson Lumber - are fascinating, but would make a book by themselves. Finally, I had to stop after about 250 names, or cost and price would become too high. One of the most difficult decisions a writer faces is deciding when to stop writing and when to proceed to try and publish.

Within each chapter, names are presented in alphabetical order. This disrupts chronology, but again, this is a reference for today, not your standard history book.

There are times when I could not determine the source of an important name. I've offered possibilities. Perhaps, if people

write to me and offer definitive information, there might be a second and improved edition.

You'll also notice that the book is uneven, that is, some write-ups are brief, others longer. For some I could find no more information than that presented. For others, I had to condense a lot of information into a few paragraphs.

Words in the text **in bold face** are either subject headings themselves or mean that there is information about that subject elsewhere in the book. Check the Index.

Much of my information came from the local libraries. The Bibliography contains many of the published sources I used. Some information came from county deed and will records. More was found in cemetery records. A few came from Internet files that seemed reliable. For some of the more obscure material, I am indebted to many people with whom I talked. Please note Acknowledgments on pages 7 and 8.

Finally, special thanks go to my wife, Nancy, herself a writer, editor, and playwright, who reviewed my manuscript but more importantly tolerated my many hours running around the county and typing at the computer, and who had to listen to my excited tale every time I discovered a new name and its origin.

Now, may you too find out *Why Is It Named That?*

- Dex Nilsson, Huntsville, Alabama

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dex Nilsson was born in Washington, D.C., a long time ago. He grew up in Indiana, attended Phillips Academy at Andover, and obtained a B.S. degree from Purdue University. In 1954 he accepted a job with Thiokol Chemical Corporation's Redstone Division and arrived in Huntsville.

Dex joined the Huntsville Little Theater, which Nancy Mitchell had founded five years earlier. They were in a play together, and within a year were married. They acted and directed, and both served more than one term as president. Dex helped form Huntsville's Arts Council, and was its first treasurer. He also helped form the early Huntsville chapter of what is today the North Alabama Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. He is a Fellow of the Society.

In 1962 Dex moved across Redstone Arsenal to join General Electric. When GE lost its contract to support NASA's Computation Laboratory in 1966, Dex and his family moved with GE to Maryland. For almost 30 years he managed the writing/publishing activities for GE's computer services organization. He also served as vice-president of the Montgomery County, Maryland, Arts Council. He and Nancy continued acting and directing with the Rockville, Maryland, Little Theater. In 2001, now retired, Dex and Nancy returned to live in Huntsville.

Fascinated with the names of things, in 1991 Dex wrote and published *Discover Why It's Called ...*, how 190 places on the Maryland Eastern Shore got their names. In 1998, he followed with *The Names of Washington, D.C.*, containing 275 stories about places in the capital city. *Why Is It Named That?* is the fifth book Dex has published under the Twinbook Communications label.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the many responsive people with whom I talked and without whom this book would not have been possible.

Special thanks go to the following: Bill Anderton at the District 3 commissioner's office for information about Jim Whitaker; Michael Baker, AMCOM command historian at Redstone Arsenal, for the latest RSA building information and photos; Nevada Beasley, librarian in the Russell Branch Library, for information about the Berachah Gym next door; Chuck Bobo for the Arvin Bobo story; Dita Bowser for information about Benton Wilcoxin; Robin Brewer for information about her Clay House Museum; Willie Mae Butler at Alabama A&M University for information about Louis Crews; Royce Ann Bowling in the Maple Hill Cemetery office who looked up death dates for me so I could subsequently find newspaper obituaries; Marilyn Dawin in the Administration Office at Calhoun Community College who set me straight about the college name; Minneola Dixon, director of College Archives and Museum, at Oakwood College, who let me go through the file on Dred Scott; Jacque Gray, Huntsville author of *A Dry Dusty Wind* and other books, who carefully reviewed and edited my final manuscript; and John and James Hays, at Haysland, for their conversation about Byrd Spring Road, Four Mile Post Road, and Hampton Cove.

More special thanks go to Dr. James W. Johnson, director of the State Black Archives, Research Center, and Museum who talked to me about Alabama A&M and gave me access to the information about James Wilson; Pat Jones of the Huntsville Department of Recreation for information about the Johnston, McGucken, and Robertson parks; Dale Kirch, principal at Hampton Cove Elementary School who started

me on the path as to how that community got its name; Alana LeCroy of the Breaking Free Mission for information about Eloise Walker; and Dr. Jannith Lewis, Oakwood College librarian, who gave me the story about Eva Dykes.

And further thanks are due Don McAnally for information about the Merrimack Mall building; Mrs. James McCowan, Max Luther's daughter, for information about her father; Margo Mead, reference librarian at UAH, who got me the information about the drives named for UAH presidents; Dr. Darwin Overholt, executive director/pastor of the Downtown Rescue Mission for talking to me about DRM and the Sapp Shelter; Raneé Pruitt in the Heritage Room of the Huntsville-Madison County Library who helped me look at maps to find who owned what and when; John Rankin for Madison history and Gooch, Reinbolt, and Slaughter data; Durwood White, Huntsville author of *Anthrax Conspiracy*, who showed me how to access courthouse records; and Bill Yell at Huntsville Utilities for the information about the Williams Well.

## 1. THE BEGINNING OF MADISON COUNTY AND HUNTSVILLE

**ALABAMA.** First, a few words about the word *Alabama*. In short, its meaning is not known.

A southern Creek Indian tribe lived in what is now central Alabama. The area's major river was named *Alabama* for this tribe. The state name in turn came from the name of the river.

The name appears in several spellings in the logs of early European explorers, the first being in the accounts of the Hernando de Soto expedition of 1540. But some believe that the writers referred to a tribe of Chickasaw Indians, not the tribe mentioned above. Some investigators believe the word comes from the Choctaw Indians. Words in that language that approximate *Alabama* translate to "thicket clearers." It is also popular belief that the word stands for "here we rest." That derivation came from writers in the 1840s and 1850s. But experts searching the Muskogean language used by the Creeks, Chickasaws, and Choctaws have been unable to find any word or phrase that could possibly translate with that meaning. All this according to the Alabama Department of Archives and History in Montgomery.

What is left of the Alabama tribe is now headquartered east of Livingston, Texas. There is a tribal council house, dance square, restaurant, shop, and tours. One of the tours goes through the Big Thicket Wilderness, which contains Lake Tombigbee.

**MADISON COUNTY.** In 1800, the Mississippi Territory consisted of Indian lands and one county, Washington County, near present-day Mobile.

## **1. Madison County and Huntsville**

What was to be Madison County was ceded to the United States in 1805 by Cherokee and Choctaw Indians. Even before that time, trappers, traders, and settlers had moved into the area from Georgia and Tennessee. The county was created in 1808 by the Governor of the Mississippi Territory, and is known (at least to present-day historians) as “Old” Madison County. The name was selected just six days after James Madison was elected President of the United States. In the far north, it was the Territory’s second county.

President Madison immediately ordered a census taken. The area was surveyed and laid out into sections. In 1809 settlers could claim their lands and purchase them from the government for a small fee - about \$2 an acre - with credit available. By the end of 1809, 24,000 acres had been purchased and registered through the federal land office in Nashville.

In March 1817 an act of Congress organized the Territory of Alabama. A constitutional convention met in Huntsville in 1819. On December 14, 1819, Congress passed the resolution that admitted Alabama into the Union. The current Madison County came into being, and Huntsville became its first capital.

**HUNTSVILLE.** The city is named for its first settler, John Hunt. Hunt’s family were Scotch-Irish and had settled in Pennsylvania, later in Virginia. John Hunt served in the Revolutionary War as a private. In the 1780s, the family was in North Carolina where Hunt was the first sheriff of Hawkins County. By the 1790s, he was in Tennessee and sheriff of Claiborne County. In 1804 Hunt saw the great limestone spring Indians had talked about and a year later brought his family to settle here, erecting a two-room cabin and establishing the start of the community that would bear his name.

Three days after Alabama became a state, the Legislature established the town limits as “a quarter mile from each side

## **1. Madison County and Huntsville**

of the public square.” In 1866, the town expanded to four square miles. It wasn’t until 1925 that the town took East Huntsville into the city limits. With the advent of its rocket and missile business in the 1950s, the population exploded from 16,000 to over 72,000, then in the 1960s to almost 140,000. By 1960, the city’s area had grown from four to 51 square miles, and by 1980 to over 100. By that time, the city’s explosive growth was pretty much over. Today, according to local promotional literature from the Visitor’s Center, Huntsville has a population of almost 180,000 and covers 174 square miles.

If he could return, I wonder what John Hunt might say.

## 2. Cities and Communities

### 2. CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

There are six incorporated cities in Madison County: Gurley, Huntsville, Madison, New Hope, Owens Cross Roads, and Triana. And there are many communities, some of which are larger than some of the incorporated cities. Some are so small that you can drive through them and not know you were there. Here are over two dozen that have intriguing names.

**BELL FACTORY.** One of the first communities of the county in which people settled was Three Forks of Flint, on the Flint River, and in the area now known as **Riverton**. Downstream of where the forks came together was a grain mill. Horatio Jones bought the grain mill, and he and subsequent leaders turned the site into the Bell Factory. The factory made yarn, and starting in 1832, it manufactured cotton cloth so successfully that it was known as the “Early Pride of Huntsville.” The original mill began in 1819, burned down in 1841, was replaced with new buildings, and operated until 1885.

Water on the river was forced over a wheel or turbine, which gave power to the factory. Since no steam was involved, the factory had no whistle. Instead a bell was rung. Hence the name.

**BOBO.** Arvin J. Bobo served in the Virginia Cavalry during the Civil War - but not on the side most Southerners might think when they read that. He was from Ohio, and when that state stopped recruiting soldiers, he went across the river to West Virginia, which was then part of Virginia, to join the Union army. Many Ohioans fought in this area, and some returned after the war. Arvin did so in 1888, with his wife Margaret and large family. They came by riverboat from Charleston, West Virginia, to Louisville, then by train to

## 2. Cities and Communities

Athens, along with all their family goods and farm animals. Once in Athens, they assembled their wagons and made their way to “the barrens” of Madison County, where Arvin had purchased land. The family farmed and prospered, and the community in the northwest part of the county became known as Bobo. Arvin and Margaret are buried in the Golightly Cemetery just off **Bobo Section Road**.

**BUCKHORN.** As early as 1808, a tavern here provided a stop for people traveling from Winchester, Tennessee, to Madison County, on what is now **Winchester Road**. Supposedly the tavern got the name Buckhorn in 1858 when William L. Fanning killed a buck near the site and presented its antlers to the tavern.

**CHASE.** A post office was established here in 1889 with the name Mercury, from the Roman messenger of the gods. In 1908, the name was changed to Chase, for the family that established the nurseries here a few years earlier.

From 1889 to 1906, the Chase brothers developed their nursery knowledge by studying with their cousins in Rochester, New York, where the cousins operated nationally known New England Nurseries. The cousins provided the capital, and the Chase family - Herbert, Charles, Robert, and Henry - came to the Huntsville area because of its wonderful soil. Theirs was no small nursery start-up either: Elizabeth Chapman wrote “They planted seventy-five acres in three hundred thousand apple trees and the rest in pears, cherries, and plums.” They organized in the Normal area in 1906 as Chase Nurseries, with Henry B. Chase as president. Henry, who had his home on Adams Street in Huntsville, also served as head of the city council from 1916 to 1918, then defeated W. T. Hutchens (see **Hutchens Building**) by three votes to become mayor from 1918 to 1920.

**CLUTTSVILLE.** A “map in the files of G.W. Jones & Sons ... drawn about 1850” shows the Clutts settlement in the northwest part of the county - apparently one of the

## 2. Cities and Communities

earliest in the county. There is a record of sale of land in the area by Davy Clutts in 1868, and subsequent transactions by other family members throughout the late 1800s.

**DAN.** This tiny community is just about at the junction of Shady Grove Road and Wall-Triana Highway. It is named for Dan Turner. The Turner family here dates from the early 1800s. Rev. H.P. Turner was the first preacher - back in those days a circuit rider - assigned to the Shady Grove United Methodist Church. Dan had its own post office from 1878 to 1901.

**DEPOSIT.** In 1812 the Creek Indians became troublesome, and Andrew Jackson organized an army of volunteers, the Tennessee Militia, to fight. In 1813 he built a fort where Thompson's Creek ran into the Tennessee River in Marshall County. It was used to deposit and store supplies as the militia moved on. The road used by Jackson's troops from New Market to Fort Deposit was called Deposit Road, and ran through this point. A post office, now discontinued, was established here in 1888 with the name Deposit.

**DITTO LANDING.** James (or John) Ditto probably was the first settler in Madison County, arriving from North Carolina in 1802, about two years before John Hunt. He set up an Indian trading post near Chickasaw Island (which was later renamed **Hobbs Island**) on the Tennessee River. In 1807 he built a ferry and carried passengers across the river. That effort expanded into a shipyard, and Ditto's boats traversed the river all the way through the shoals. About 1820, James Hardie operated a store at Ditto's Landing. It was a busy port: Hardie wrote, "From this place all the cotton made [in Madison County] is shipped to New Orleans . . . about 15,000 to 17,000 bales. . . ."

Today **Ditto Landing Park** is site of camp sites, a marina, docks, and boat ramps. It is at the Tennessee River just east of Whitesburg Drive.

## 2. Cities and Communities

**FANNINGS CROSSING.** This spot a mile or so north of **Buckhorn** is probably named for the same Fanning family as the hunter at Buckhorn. **Winchester Road** crossed a branch of the Flint River at this point.

**FARLEY.** John Benton Farley was born in 1860 near what was then Whitesburg. (See **Whitesburg Drive**.) He married Mattie Elizabeth McGaha in 1882. He became a doctor and practiced medicine. They had three children. This area now in the city and surrounding Whitesburg Drive near Green Cove Road is said to take its name from Dr. Farley.

In her book on placename origins, Virginia Foscue attributes the name to Dr. Farley's appointment as the first postmaster, in 1893. But in a typed history in the Huntsville Public Library, Ruth Ross claims an 1818 map shows a place called Farley that encompassed over 2,000 acres - indication that Dr. Farley's parents must have been among the area's first settlers.

**FISK.** The community known as Fisk grew up where Walker Creek and other streams form the West Fork of the Flint River. Several Fisks are shown in the 1850 Census, oldest of whom is Goodwin, a farmer from South Carolina. Virginia Foscue's book about place names says only that Fisk was named for an early settler and that a post office was established in 1885.

James Record is reported to remember a newspaper article in 1880 telling that J.B. Fisk brought a watermelon to town for sale; he was known as the Watermelon King of Hazel Green. John Fisk (the same J.B.?) had a house and store, and Will Fisk a house and store about 1908 or 1910. Cabe Fisk ran a steam powered gin in the area.

In 1929 a flood destroyed the village. Some of the buildings were moved to where Fisk is now, on U.S. 231/431, just north of Hazel Green. There's no sign for the community. Appropriately, it is where Flood Lane meets the highway.

## 2. Cities and Communities

**GURLEY.** The Memphis and Charleston Railway reached here in 1857, and the community was called Gurley's Tank and later Gurleyville. Its post office was established in 1866, but the name was shortened to Gurley in 1883. The town was incorporated in 1891.

Captain Frank B. Gurley obtained notoriety when he commanded a local cavalry unit under General Nathan Bedford Forrest during the Civil War. But this town's name comes from his father, John Gurley, one of the county's pioneers.

**HAMPTON COVE.** The building development that became the Hampton Cove community was begun by the Hays family. James Hays told me that the family of his mother, Annie Wade Street Hays, was descended from Wade Hampton III, the Confederate general and South Carolina senator. Thus the Hampton Cove community got its name from a Hays family name.

Wade Hampton II was a colonel on Andrew Jackson's staff at the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. James Record has written that in 1810, Hampton arranged for construction of Fort Hampton on the Elk River in neighboring Limestone County.

Wade Hampton III was born in Charleston in 1818, graduated from the University of South Carolina, studied law but never practiced, became a planter, and served in the state house of representatives (1852-1856) and senate (1858-1861). He commanded Hampton's Legion in the Confederate Army during the Civil War and by 1865 was a lieutenant general. He became Governor of South Carolina in 1876, and rose to the U.S. Senate in 1878 where he served until 1891. He died in 1902.

**HARBINVILLE.** Thomas Nathan Harbin was born in 1904, a son of James Enoch Harbin, Jr., and Odie Lee Wolaver. Tom farmed, then for 35 years operated a general

## 2. Cities and Communities

store, later Harbin Grocery, at the corner of Greenville Pike and **Joe Quick Road**. That's where the small community there takes its name. Tom died in 1978.

**HARVEST**. This community's name was originally Kelly, after Thomas B. Kelly, who was postmaster in 1905. The Kelly family had orchards, and from among their crops, shipped "Early Harvest Apples." Several growers along **Ford Chapel Road** did the same. The current name comes from those apples. (See **Jeff**.)

**HAZEL GREEN**. There were early settlers reported in the area between 1804 and 1809. The post office was established in 1829. Several sources say that the community takes its name from the green hazelnut trees in the area. But Frankie Glynn, writing in *The Huntsville Times* of January 28, 1968, says that Robert Irwin was its first store owner in 1809 and its first postmaster, and that Hazel Green is named after his wife.

**HOBBS ISLAND**. Hubbard Hobbs was a Revolutionary War soldier. He and his wife Martha raised a large family. Hubbard died in 1817, and Martha moved to Alabama in 1820. Her oldest son, John, had settled in Madison County where he traded with the Indians, and owned a lot of land, including the island in the Tennessee River and the nearby community that still bear his name.

**JEFF**. Joshua O. Kelly bought land here in 1853. His father is said to have come, with others of his family, to Madison County from Virginia in 1819 and to have settled off what is now Pulaski Pike. There have been Kelly descendants in the area ever since. With his two sons, David E. and Joshua, Jr., Joshua formed successful mercantile, blacksmith, ginning, and farming businesses. The sons eventually applied for a post office to be named Jeff Davis in honor of the president of the Confederacy. They were told the name had to be one word only, so settled on Jeff. Today at Jeff is Kelly Drive, and just to its south, Kelly Springs Road.

## 2. Cities and Communities

A different story: Jesse Richardson in his *Alabama Encyclopedia* writes that, much earlier than the above, there was a Cherokee Indian settlement at the headwaters of Indian Creek, and when white settlers arrived, the name Jeffs' Village had already been given to the settlement "because the head man bore that name."

**MADISON.** See **5, In and Around Madison.**

**MAYSVILLE.** A post office was established here in 1850. The May name is thought to have come from a local family or woman.

**MONROVIA.** It seems unlikely that it is named for a local Monroe, or President Monroe, or anyone similar, and it does not appear on the 1850 county map. Instead, the community was probably (I'm guessing) first settled and named after the Civil War by freed slaves for the capital city of Liberia. There, Monrovia is the major city, today with a population of over a million. There are also Monrovia's in Indiana, Kansas, and northeast Los Angeles.

**MOONTOWN.** Unlike Huntsville, it doesn't have anything to do with space or the moon. This small community of farms just east of Huntsville takes its name from the Moon family. In 1814 Richard Moon patented land in this part of the county. Also in the county, in 1820, John and Hester Moon were married. John had come from Pennsylvania. In 1826 they had a daughter, Mary Ann "Polly" Moon. In 1842, she married Andrew Sublett. Today, the Moontown area is home to many Moon and Sublett descendants.

**MOORES MILL.** This rapidly expanding community takes its name from the mill that once stood to its north on the Flint River. See **Moore's Mill Road.**

**NEBO.** This is a biblical name. According to Deuteronomy 34, Moses died on Mount Nebo.

## 2. Cities and Communities

**NEW HOPE.** The first settler was William Cloud, and in the 1820s the community was called Cloud's Town. In 1832, the community tried to organize with the name Vienna, but there already was a Vienna in Alabama. (It was down on the Tombigbee River.) So the community grew up using the name from its Methodist Church. In 1834 the New Hope post office was officially established, and in 1956 the town was incorporated.

**NEW MARKET.** In 1804 Isaac and Joseph Criner settled near here on the Mountain Fork of the Flint River, becoming the earliest settlers in this part of the county. The first settlement in New Market itself was made in 1806. A post office was officially established in 1836. Idea behind the place name was to establish "a new market" for farmers of the area.

New Market is one of the most common community names in the United States. The oldest Newmarket in the country is the one in New Hampshire, named in 1727 for Newmarket in County Suffolk, England.

**OWENS CROSSROADS.** This community was named for its first postmaster, Thomas P. Owens, appointed in 1869. The city was incorporated in 1967.

**PLEVNA.** Hickory Flat was the first name of this community, from its many hickory trees and flat land. A post office was opened in 1878. In 1886, the railroad arrived, running south all the way to Hobbs Island, and the name of the community was changed to Plevna. Railroad conductor Lev Jones is credited with choosing the name, but why he selected it isn't recorded. The name reportedly comes from a city in Russia, the location of a fortress during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877. There are also Plevnas in Missouri, Kansas, and Montana.

**RYLAND.** Russel J. Kelly owned land here, and the village was named Kelly's Crossing, because one had to

## 2. Cities and Communities

cross Kelly's land to get to it. When Kelly died, Virgil Homer Ryland bought some of the land and established a general store and post office. Virgil was the first postmaster, appointed in 1895, so the community took its name from him. He served as postmaster until 1898. He died in 1900.

**SWANCOTT.** The "cott" suffix comes from the Old English "cot" and indicates, among other meanings, a place of shelter. There is a Swan Pond nearby in the **Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge** and a Swan Creek close in Limestone County. And, yes, there are swans in the area.

**TONEY.** Virginia Foscue attributes the name to Blanche R. Toney, the first postmaster, appointed in 1898, but Toneys were in the area much earlier. There's a marriage record of Elijah Toney, Jr., in 1856, and it's known that he and his family lived on nearby Shady Grove Road. In an undated typed manuscript in the Heritage Room, Edna McClure of Toney has written that the first postmaster was Blanche, but the settlement was named for a Jim Toney. Oldest Toneys buried in the area (in Madison Crossroads Cemetery) are Hugh L. (1837-1908) and Sarah E. (1840-1888).

**TRIANA.** Much early area transportation was along rivers. Triana became an important port where Indian Creek flowed into the Tennessee River. The village was incorporated in 1819, and a post office was established in 1821.

In 1821 Huntsvillians Thomas Fearn and the wealthy LeRoy Pope headed the Indian Creek Navigation Company to build a canal to connect Hunt's spring and the Tennessee River at Triana via Indian Creek. It was used to ship cotton as early as 1827, and it was completed in 1835. But within ten years, Whitesburg Pike became a faster route from Huntsville to the Tennessee, and Triana's days as a major port began to ebb.

The name Triana is said to be taken from that of a soldier who came to the New World with Columbus. Who picked it or why isn't known.

### 3. MOUNTAINS AND STREAMS

**ALDRIDGE CREEK.** According to James Record, in 1811 William Aldridge bought land in the county. Aldridge Creek appeared as early as on an 1817 map (drawn by Huntsvillian F. Sannoner). But by the 1830 census, there was no Aldridge listed in the area.

The creek gained special notoriety when it flooded much of southeast Huntsville in the spring of 1999, with the subsequent removal of nearby homes and a five-year plan for improvements.

**CHAPMAN MOUNTAIN.** The big hill that highway U.S. 72 crosses in northeast Huntsville is known as Chapman Mountain.

Reuben Chapman moved to Huntsville from Virginia in 1824 and was admitted to the bar a year later. He moved to Morgan County, from which he was elected to Congress in 1835, serving until 1847 when he returned to Huntsville. Right away he was urged to become Governor of Alabama, and he served from 1847 to 1849. During the Civil War, his home was burned, and he was held prisoner by Union troops. Chapman had owned land around the mountain, and in 1873 he bought a home there, where he resided until his death in 1882.

**ECHOLS HILL.** In downtown Huntsville, Echols Hill is named for Major William Holding Echols, who owned the LeRoy Pope home atop the hill. (See **Echols Avenue**.)

**FAGAN CREEK.** This stream begins at a spring on Monte Sano Mountain, runs down the west side of the mountain through the Blossomwood subdivision, crosses California

### 3. Mountains and Streams

Street, and follows Lowe Avenue through the city. Huntsville now has most of the creek walled and/or concreted (and wisely so), so it looks more like a drainage ditch than the free-flowing creek it once was. It is named for Peter Fagan, who owned land on the side of the mountain as early as the 1820s, and was the town barber, with his shop on Jefferson Street.

**GARTH MOUNTAIN.** The hill between Whitesburg Drive and Jones Valley, from U.S. 431 on the north to Four Mile Post Road on the south, is known as Garth Mountain. It is named for the family that owned the land and the valley east of it from the 1880s to 1940. (See **Garth Road** and **Walton Mountain**.)

**GREEN MOUNTAIN.** Its color is green much of the year, but that's not how it got its name. It's named for Charles D. Green, a settler on the mountain during the 1800s. According to one write-up, Green was born Kurt Gruene in 1828 in Europe, came to America in 1849, and settled here in the 1860s. According to another, there were claims by a Green as early as 1838. But both agree that, whatever his origins, he was a cabinet maker and carpenter. Green died in 1902 and is buried in Maple Hill Cemetery.

**KEEL MOUNTAIN.** To the east of Huntsville's **Green Mountain** and **Hampton Cove**, the next large mountain is Keel Mountain. On its east side, near the county line with Jackson County is **Keel Mountain Road**. Jesse Keel and his wife Priscilla Whitaker were from North Carolina, coming to North Alabama some time before 1819. They settled in what is now Keel Hollow. In 1841 they moved to the mountain itself, and it is named after Jesse. They had 12 children. Jesse died in 1846, Priscilla in 1870.

**MADKIN MOUNTAIN.** From the east, there are two mountains prominently visible on Redstone Arsenal. The one to the south is Madkin Mountain, to the north is **Weeden Mountain**.

### 3. Mountains and Streams

I believe Madkin Mountain is a misnomer.

The 1909 G.W. Jones map, plus 1906 courthouse records, show the land to be owned by Mrs. Elizabeth Madkin. However, I could find no further information about a Madkin family in Madison County. Then and earlier, adjacent lands were owned by the Matkins family, sometimes written Matkin, even Mattkin. Some of their lands were in the name of Elizabeth G. Matkins. Was this a coincidence, or were these neighboring families with such similar names and locales really one and the same? And, thus, shouldn't this be Matkin Mountain?

There's a Matkin Cemetery nearby on Redstone Arsenal, but only two grave markers, for Elizabeth's daughter Margaret Matkin and granddaughter Mary Patton Matkin.

**MONTE SANO MOUNTAIN.** In 1827, Dr. Thomas Fearn, along with his brothers Robert and George, started to establish a small community on the big mountain directly east of downtown Huntsville, near its medicinal springs. Dr. Fearn sent patients to the springs, and some were reportedly cured. He is credited with naming the mountain "Monte Sano," Spanish for "Mountain of Health."

**PILL HILL.** The hilly area from Governors Drive, south to Drake Avenue, and east of Whitesburg Drive is known as Pill Hill because of the many doctors who have homes there.

**PINHOOK CREEK.** This is the little stream that runs through downtown Huntsville west of Memorial Parkway. There seems to be no local story as to why it's called Pinhook. William Read in an issue of the Louisiana State University *Bulletin* offers the background of a Louisiana Pinhook Bridge. He says the Pinhook word might have come from early settlers' misunderstanding or mispronunciation of an Indian word "pinsahuck," which stands for the linden or basswood tree.

### 3. Mountains and Streams

**RAINBOW MOUNTAIN.** This little Rainbow mountain in Madison lies between Slaughter and Hughes Roads, just north of Old Madison Pike. There's a Rainbow Drive and some Rainbow subdivisions - and they shouldn't be "Rainbows" at all. The property was owned by original settler Elisha Rainbolt and his wife Phyllis (which he spelled Fillas). His name came from a Dutch ancestor and was originally spelled Reinboldt. Pronounce that name, and you can see why people misunderstood it to be Rainbow.

**RUSSEL HILL.** This rise on West Holmes Street is named for Col. Albert Russel who moved to Huntsville in 1816, purchased the hill, and made his residence there. He had served seven years as a Revolutionary War soldier. He died in 1818 and is buried in Maple Hill Cemetery. Descendent **Russel Erskine** is named for him.

**SHARP MOUNTAIN.** The mountain, at the far eastern edge of the county, and Sharp's Cove, the valley beneath it, take their names from John Sharp, who arrived here with his wife Martha and ten children in 1809. They were from Pennsylvania, via Kentucky. He had been a major in the Revolutionary War.

**WALTON'S MOUNTAIN.** Travelers going over the hill on **Carl T. Jones Drive** might still see a sign advertising homes on Walton Mountain. It was never really the name of the hill, which has been called **Garth Mountain** for many years. It is instead the name of the real estate development atop the hill and named for Walton Fleming, area developer, landowner, and community activist who died in 1996. The Fleming family whose home is at the base of the mountain on Whitesburg Drive owns much of the land on the mountain and in the area.

**WARD MOUNTAIN.** At the north tip of the mountains on Redstone Arsenal, near the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, is Ward Mountain, named for George W. Ward, who owned the land in the area as early as the 1860s.

### 3. Mountains and Streams

**WEEDEN MOUNTAIN.** From the east, there are two mountains prominently visible on Redstone Arsenal. The one to the south is **Madkin Mountain**, to the north is Weeden Mountain. Dr. William Weeden had settled in Marengo County, Alabama. When his wife died, he remarried and, in 1832, moved to Huntsville, where he purchased land on the mountain that now bears his name. (See the **Weeden House**.)

#### 4. County Roads

### 4. COUNTY ROADS

**BOB WADE LANE.** Littleberry and David Wade came from Virginia to Madison County in 1817, Littleberry settling in the Big Cove area and David on what is now Bob Wade Lane. David turned his land into a large cotton plantation, and his initial cabin into a fine home. David and his wife, Eliza Grantland, had six children, one of whom was Robert B. Wade. Robert moved to his own land near Big Cove, so when David died in the early 1860s, the plantation was left to two single daughters, Amanda and Harriet. They ran the plantation successfully until their deaths in the 1890s. At that time, the land was left to Robert's son, also named Robert B. Wade. There once was a Wade Cemetery, but with no markers and no record of who was buried there. In 1940, the final Robert B. Wade was buried in Maple Hill Cemetery.

**BROWNS FERRY ROAD.** Bob Wallace Avenue in Huntsville, Old Madison Pike between Huntsville and Madison, and Browns Ferry Road from Madison into Limestone County is all one road, eventually leading to Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant on the Tennessee River about ten miles southwest of Athens. In the mid-1800s there was a Browns Ferry operating there for people needing to cross the river. When the present nuclear plant began operation in 1973, it was the largest in the world. In 1976 a fire shut down one of its three units. In 2000, its two operating units produced over 18 billion kilowatts of power for customers throughout the Tennessee Valley area.

**CAPSHAW ROAD** runs east-west to (or from) the community of Capshaw in neighboring Limestone County. Virginia Foscoe attributes the name to the Chickasaw words "bok kapassa" (meaning cold creek) or "oka kapassa" (cold water). However, James Record lists Capshaw as a

#### 4. County Roads

community shown on an 1892 map, and adds the note "named after David Capshaw." John Rankin lists David and a William Capshaw as original land buyers in either the western part of the county or in eastern Limestone County - the latter and its borders hadn't been established at the time.

**COUNTESS ROAD.** No royalty is involved, although the Countiss family obtained their first lands in America through a grant from Lord Calvert of Maryland. Eventually part of the family came to Alabama and settled in Tuscaloosa. There Ira Jackson Countiss was born in 1825. He married Nancy Margaret Durrett in 1848. One of their daughters, Stella, married a Methodist minister, W. James Reid. Reid was sent to Madison County to preach and sent back such glowing reports of the land that, by 1896, Ira and most of his children and families all moved here and located north of Huntsville. It was apparently Ira who changed the family name from Countiss to Countess.

There is an 1896 deed from Robert. B. Wade to Ira J. Countess for 80 acres. **Bob Wade Road** is on the west side of U.S. 231, and Countess Road is the same road on the east side of U.S. 231, both just north of Huntsville.

**FORD'S CHAPEL ROAD.** This east-west road crosses Wall-Triana Highway just south of **Harvest**. In 1810, Richard Ford bought land here. The first Methodist Society in the local circuit (preachers then were circuit riders) was organized at his home. He also allowed four acres of his land to be used as a campground for the Methodists, and by 1819 a church was set up. Richard and his wife Betsy eventually deeded the land and church to the Ford Chapel trustees so that it became Methodist property. The church, or chapel, has undergone many renovations, but still stands on its original foundation.

**JOE QUICK ROAD.** This is the main road going east from the middle of Hazel Green and U.S. 231.

#### 4. County Roads

William Lafayette Quick was from Hardin County, Tennessee, where his father was a blacksmith. Will married Lucy Ann Maroney in 1882, and some time around 1900, they moved to Alabama, where he built a grist mill, cotton gin, sawmill, blacksmith forge and foundry, and had the first electric generator in the county.

Will also designed and built the first “flying machine” in Alabama (although it reportedly didn’t fly too well). Will and Lucy eventually had ten children, eight of whom became early aviationists. Cady was one of the first women pilots, three sons were barnstormers, Curtis obtained a patent for his airplane crop duster, and Tom was a test pilot and another patent holder for his airplane emission control. Will died in 1927. He was inducted into the Alabama Hall of Fame in 1982, and his flying machine has been placed in the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville.

Joe, another son, stayed on the ground. He was Madison County commissioner of District 1 for 24 years, from 1936 to 1960, and the road bears his name. When he took office his district had no hard-surfaced roads. When he left, it had 150 miles of the best hard-surfaced roads in the region.

**MOORES MILL ROAD.** Sam Darwin III has the farm to the north of where Moore’s Mill stood. He remembers the mill from the 1930s. It ground corn and made meal. It stood on the north bank of the Flint River, just west of where the road crossed. The road was then called Hillsboro Road, and today’s Moores Mill Road’s bridge crossing isn’t quite in the same place. Although his great grandmother married a Moore, we were unable to determine exactly which Moore lent his name to the mill.

All I could determine from courthouse files was that, in the 1820s, Benjamin, David, Gabriel, James, John, and William Moore all bought land in Madison County. Moores closest to the mill location were John and Emily, who bought land there from William Blankenship in 1871.

#### 4. County Roads

**NICK DAVIS ROAD.** This road runs west from Jeff Road all the way to Athens in Limestone County. Virginian Nicholas Davis was one of neighboring Limestone County's earliest settlers. He was a representative in the first Alabama legislature in Huntsville in 1819, later was state senator, even ran for Governor. He and his wife, Martha Hargrave, had a son Nick Davis, Jr., born in Limestone County. In 1852, after serving during the Mexican War, Nick became a lawyer with his practice in Huntsville. He served two terms in the state legislature, was a lieutenant colonel of the Alabama Infantry during the Civil War (but didn't see action), and after the war returned to his law practice. His wife was Sophia Lowe, daughter of Bartley M. Lowe (see **Lowe Avenue**). Nick Davis, Jr., died in 1874.

**OLD RAILROAD BED ROAD** cuts across the northwest portion of the county, running through Harvest, Toney, Bobo, and Elkwood, and yes, it follows an old railroad bed - that of the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis Railroad (the N.C.&L), which operated from 1887 to 1929.

**OPP REYNOLDS ROAD.** This is an east-west road just south of **Ready Section Road**, in the northwest part of the county. The earliest Reynolds in the area for whom I could find a record was James W. Reynolds. He bought land in the area in 1858. He and his wife Elizabeth were from Kentucky. But later there really was a person with the odd name of Opp. Opp James Reynolds, from whom the road obviously takes its name, had land transactions in the area recorded at the courthouse in 1913 and 1917. He and his wife Minnie B. are buried in the Madison Cross Roads Cemetery. Opp's dates are 1881-1961.

**READY SECTION ROAD** is a major east-west road in the northwest corner of the county. Which Ready gave the road its name is unclear to me. Nicholas Ready bought land just west of Huntsville in 1820. But Elvin (Almo), Charles, John, and Jasper Ready (sometimes also spelled Reedy and Reddy) later bought land, apparently entire sections, all in

#### 4. County Roads

the far northwest corner and in the vicinity of today's Ready Section Road. Some of these Readys are buried in Ready Cemetery, which is two miles north of Toney; others are in Charity Cemetery, two miles northwest of Hazel Green.

In the Doolings' book, *Huntsville - A Picture History*, there's a picture of one-room Ready School. It was located about a mile south of Charity Church, just about at the eastern end of what is now Ready Section Road.

**STEGER ROAD.** In 1806, Francis Eppes Harris and his wife Mary Macon Harris moved from Virginia to Madison County, building a home about four miles from Huntsville. John Perratt Steger, Jr., also of Virginia, married the Harris daughter, Rebecca, and they too moved to Madison County, in 1810. They had nine children. One of them, just as an example, Kennon Harris Steger, became a successful farmer, married in 1838, and produced eleven children. Most of the Stegers located in the eastern portion of the county, and it isn't clear for which one, if indeed any single one, this road north of Huntsville is named.

**Steger's Store** stood on the west side of where Steger Road joins U.S. 231. A gin mill, grist mill, and blacksmith shop operated there from 1913 to 1952.

**WALL-TRIANA HIGHWAY.** I spent a lot of time looking for the person named Wall in the name of this major north-south county road, until the folks in the Madison Engineering Department told me there was no such person. The road has its name because it runs between the communities of Wall, Tennessee, and Triana, Alabama.

**WINCHESTER ROAD.** One of the earliest roads, it was used by the early settlers who arrived in Madison County from Tennessee. It then connected Winchester with Madison County and Huntsville - and still does. Winchester, by the way, was named in 1809 for James Winchester, captain in the Revolutionary Army.

### 5. IN AND AROUND MADISON

The first known settler in what is now the city of Madison was John Cartwright, who arrived in 1818. The town of Madison wasn't established, though, until 1856 when it became a station on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Before it was just Madison, it was Madison Station, and the local Historic District and the Historical Preservation Society today use that name.

In 1858, Judge Clemons planned town lots fronting on the railroad (hence the name **Front Street**) on one side of the tracks. A depot was built on one of the lots across the tracks, and on Front Street, a house was built for the station agent, Thomas J. Clay. The town's first business was a saw mill run by J. J. Akers. Madison was incorporated in 1869. A historical marker lists its first officials: William R. Johnston, mayor, and aldermen William B. Dunn, the depot agent; Thomas J. Clay, the first postmaster; George W. Martin, the town's first merchant; James H. Bibb, a planter; and the town doctor, Dr. George R. Sullivan.

Madison didn't begin to grow to its present size until after activities at Redstone Arsenal expanded. In 1955, Madison was only one-half square mile in total size. In 1956 its first subdivision began to be developed. And by 1957, the city was forced to buy its first police car. Today Madison's population is over 32,000.

**BALCH ROAD.** This is a north-south road on the west side of Madison.

Joseph A. Balch, Jr., ran the grocery store on Main Street. In the early 1950s as the town began to expand, he served on the city commission and its industrial development board. Woodrow Alden Balch was from Monrovia, a farmer, and

## 5. In and Around Madison

county commissioner for a dozen years. Contrary to what many people told me, the road is not named for either.

Hezekiah Balch - apparently the first Balch in the area - was born in Sparta, Tennessee, in 1811, and moved to Madison County about 1830, where he operated a grist mill on Indian Creek. A grandson, Jesse Burton Balch, born in 1878, eventually married Gertrude Clutts. Jesse was apparently the only one of his generation to stay all his life on the original plot of land, and it is for him that the road is named.

In writing about the Gooch family for *The Heritage of Madison County*, Barbara Gooch Ciliax wrote “**Gooch Lane** joins Balch Road at the west end. Balch Road was named for Jesse Balch, who later became Richard’s father-in-law.” Richard Gooch married Ada Mable Balch in 1924.

**BUTTERMILK ALLEY.** This narrow one-block lane runs from Front Street to Arnett Street. Its place on Front Street is just across the railroad tracks from where the old station stood. It got its name from Mrs. William Humphrey, whose home was on its corner, giving buttermilk and bread to the hobos who rode the trains during the Great Depression years of the 1930s. The city formally recognized the name in 1986 by putting up an official street sign.

**CLAY HOUSE MUSEUM.** Thomas J. Clay was Madison’s depot agent, merchant, and first postmaster. His home, built in 1870, still stands at 23 Front Street. He ran his mercantile business from there.

The Clay House Museum is across the railroad at 16 Main Street. Its house was built between 1858 and 1866 and was originally occupied by Jane Curtis. I’m told that one of Thomas’ brothers, Andrew, died, and his widow, Sarah Russel Webb Clay, next bought the house, and it is from her that the museum takes its name. Present Madison old-timers probably remember the house as that of Dr. Jesse Ollie Wikle, who bought it in 1923 and practiced there until 1981.

## 5. In and Around Madison

The Clay House Museum features 100 years of decorations, each room representing a different decade. It also contains Director Robin Brewer's extensive collection of Noritake china. She's the author of *Noritake Dinnerware: Identification Made Easy*. (And, since we are talking in this book about names, that word comes from the village, Noritake, near Nagoya, Japan, in which the china manufacturer, Nippon Toki Gomei Kaisha, is located.)

**DUBLIN PARK.** This park is named for Clyde Harris and Mary Caldwell Dublin. (See **9. Parks: Dublin Memorial Park.**)

**GOOCH LANE.** Roland Gooch bought land near Madison in 1818, and moved his wife Elizabeth and their five children here from Virginia. They had three more children in Madison, and there are many Gooch family members in the area. Much later, Matt Roland Gooch, a grandchild, married Mary Pike. They lived in what is now the northwest part of Madison on Old Athens Pike, the name of which was changed to Gooch Lane after their son Richard Matson Gooch, who worked for the state highway department for 19 years. (See also **Balch Road**, above.)

**HUGHES ROAD.** In recent years, this road has become the main street of Madison. It is named for the Hughes family, most notable of whom is probably G. Walton Hughes. For over 50 years he was Madison's only druggist. Walton was the eldest son of Madison settler John A. Hughes and his wife Laura Vaughn Hughes. The family did successful farming on over 400 acres along this road.

In 1922 Walton had completed requirements for pharmacy, married Sarah Parham, and took a job in Huntsville. It was about 1924 when he bought the Burton & Wise Drug Store in Madison, across from the railroad depot. He remained there for the next 50 years. He was known as "Doc" to many of his customers. He was always active in community affairs and served as mayor from 1944 to 1949.

## 5. In and Around Madison

**PALMER ROAD.** Oziah Palmer was a soldier with the Ohio Volunteers who liked the area and returned to Madison after the Civil War to buy 80 acres. In 1870 his brother Samuel and his wife Ginny followed him and purchased the land from him. They had ten children, among them Roy and Octavia, born in 1874 and 1876. In 1900, Roy added 122 more acres to the farm. He was a successful farmer and was active in community affairs. Roy died in 1962, Octavia in 1965. Palmer Road and the extensive **Palmer Park**, which is located at their home site, take their names from this family.

**RAINBOW MOUNTAIN.** This mountain in Madison is a misnomer. See **3. Mountains and Streams: Rainbow Mountain.**

**SLAUGHTER ROAD.** There's a courthouse record of a John Slaughter leaving land via a will to James Slaughter in 1812, and other records soon thereafter involving John, James, William, Thomas, and Samuel Slaughter. So these were all quite early area settlers. But the story I have about the road is as follows:

Virginian Robert Lanford came to Huntsville in 1809. He was a wealthy planter who bought 2,500 acres west of Huntsville. His son, William, built his home in the area, on Madison Pike near Indian Creek. William had three children, and one of his daughters, Mary Elizabeth, married Dr. John Robert Slaughter. When William was old, Mary and John came to live with him. Dr. Slaughter practiced medicine from an office built on the property. Slaughter Road runs north and south at the east edge of Madison and along Indian Creek, and the road takes its name from Dr. Slaughter.

**SULLIVAN STREET.** Where **Wall-Triana Road** goes through Madison, it changes its name to Sullivan Street, named for the city's first doctor, G. R. Sullivan. Dr. Sullivan also set up the first drug store in Madison, in 1871.

### 6. DOWNTOWN HUNTSVILLE STREETS

In 1810 the original plat of Huntsville consisted of 20 blocks, laid out in a 4 by 5 grid - from Holmes Street to Williams Street, and from Gallatin Street to Lincoln Street. The streets were named for patriots of the day - the city hadn't existed long enough to name them for community leaders or favorite sons. Most of the original streets and their positions remain today.

**ADAMS STREET.** This street was added to the city in 1825. From 1821 to 1825, Henry Adams was editor of the local *Alabama Republican* newspaper and *Planters Magazine*. But there is no indication that the street was named for him. Instead it is more likely named for John Quincy Adams, who became U.S. President that same year.

John Quincy was son of Abigail and John Adams, the second U.S. President. He graduated from Harvard, got elected to the U.S. Congress. In 1817, President Monroe named him Secretary of State, and he negotiated cession of Florida from Spain. After his Presidency, he returned to the House of Representatives and served for 17 years, until he had a stroke and died in the Speaker's Room in 1848.

Adams Street might be best known among older Huntsvillians for the huge oak tree that once stood right in its middle. It was cut down in 1956, considered a hazard to automobile traffic. It had 201 rings, meaning it had started to grow in 1755, long before the city - even the country - was formed.

**CHURCH STREET.** This is one of the city's earliest streets. It was apparently intended as a street for churches, hence its name, yet the city's biggest downtown churches were built elsewhere.

## 6. Downtown Huntsville Streets

Now on downtown Church Street there are three buildings pertinent to the name: A stone in the wall of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church says the original was built in 1874, the church was reconstructed in 1909, and the last remodeling was in 1974. Across the street is St. John's African Methodist Episcopal Church. The stone on it tells that it was built in 1900, with its annex added in 1925. At the corner of Monroe and Church Streets is the building that was once the First Baptist Church, known to many as "the Church Street Church," built between 1925 and 1955. A sign declares that it is now used as the Full Life and Achievement Center.

**CLINTON AVENUE.** It is possible that the street was named for DeWitt Clinton, Governor of New York, widely known for his championing of the Erie Canal. But it is more likely that it is named for George Clinton, DeWitt's uncle.

George Clinton was the first Governor of New York. He was such an advocate of the states that he tried to block ratification of the Constitution. In 1804, Clinton came in second for President behind Thomas Jefferson, and thus was elected Vice President. In 1808 he ran again for the Presidency, again coming in second, and serving as Vice President under James Madison. He was Vice President when Madison County and Huntsville were formed.

**ECHOLS AVENUE.** Following the land sale of 1809 in which he bought much of the land that would later become downtown Huntsville, LeRoy Pope selected the highest hill overlooking the town as the site for his home. The home, one of the great ante-bellum mansions of Alabama (and still standing), was sold to Charles Hayes Patton and inherited by his daughter who married Major William Holding Echols. Echols had been born in Huntsville in 1834, graduated from West Point, and served with the Confederacy as a major of engineers at Charleston. After the war Echols farmed cotton, was connected with the **Bell Factory**, and was president of the First National Bank. He died in 1909.

## 6. Downtown Huntsville Streets

Echols Avenue cuts across what was originally part of the Pope site. You would think that the hill would be named Pope Hill, but it is commonly known instead as **Echols Hill**.

**EUSTIS AVENUE.** The avenue is named for William Eustis. A surgeon from Massachusetts, Eustis served in the Revolutionary War, served in the U.S. House of Representatives, then became Secretary of War under President Madison. He attempted to prepare the Army before the War of 1812, but had to resign in the face of criticism following American reverses on the battlefield. He went on to become minister to Holland, regained his seat in the House, finally served as Governor of Massachusetts.

Part of what is now Eustis Avenue was once named Maiden Lane, which reportedly got its name because the street led to the nearby Huntsville Female Seminary, and its students regularly walked what was then indeed just a lane.

**FRANKLIN STREET.** It is named for Benjamin Franklin - publisher, author, scientist, politician, and statesman.

Franklin was born in 1706. By 20 he owned his own press, publishing the *Pennsylvania Gazette* (later *The Saturday Evening Post*), and had begun writing *Poor Richard's Almanack*. He also served as clerk to the Pennsylvania Assembly, ran a book store, and undertook numerous scientific experiments - inventing the Franklin stove (more efficient than a fireplace) and proving (through his famous kite experiment) that lightning is electricity.

Franklin was 46 when he began his political career. In 1757 he went to England as an agent, and by 1776 knew more about America than anyone in England, and more about England than anyone in America. He served in the Continental Congress and helped draft the Declaration of Independence. He became a minister to France, securing their aid, and by 1783, he, John Adams, and John Jay

## 6. Downtown Huntsville Streets

obtained the peace treaty that guaranteed national independence. In 1787 he attended the Constitutional Convention and urged ratification of the Constitution and inauguration of the new government under his friend George Washington. Franklin died in 1790.

**GALLATIN STREET** is named for Swiss immigrant Albert Gallatin. He was elected Senator from Pennsylvania but couldn't serve because he hadn't been a citizen long enough. He went on to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives, and as Secretary of the Treasury from 1801 to 1812, minister to France from 1816 to 1823, then president of the National Bank of New York. Gallatin was also an expert on American Indian languages and president of the New York Historical Society.

**GATES AVENUE.** The avenue is named for General Horatio Gates. In 1772 this former Englishman settled in Virginia, and when the Revolutionary War began, he immediately volunteered in the Continental Army, serving as Adjutant General. In the field, he forced British surrender at Saratoga, but was later defeated at the battle of Camden, South Carolina. He ended the war working at Washington's headquarters, then freed his slaves and retired to New York.

**GREENE STREET.** Although it was originally spelled "Green" (and some maps and signs still read that way), the street was named for Revolutionary War hero Nathaniel Greene. During the Revolutionary War, Rhode Islander Greene was made a brigadier general and served with Washington from 1775 to 1778, acting informally as second in command. In 1781 Greene outmaneuvered Cornwallis to win the Southern campaign. After the war he was given land by the State of Georgia and lived the rest of his life in Savannah.

**HOLMES AVENUE.** The avenue is not named for Oliver Wendell Holmes, as many people guess (and not for Sherlock Holmes either). It is named for David Holmes.

## 6. Downtown Huntsville Streets

David Holmes grew up in Virginia and in 1797 was elected to the U.S. Congress where he served six consecutive terms. In 1809, President Jefferson appointed Holmes Governor of the Mississippi Territory, of which "Old" Madison County was a part. He succeeded Robert Williams (see **Williams Street**) and served as Territorial Governor from 1809 to 1817. When Mississippi became a state, Holmes became its first Governor.

**JEFFERSON STREET.** It is named for Thomas Jefferson, one of the most remarkable of the men of the Revolutionary era.

Jefferson was born in Virginia in 1743, attended William and Mary College, and embarked on a political career. In 1774 he wrote resolutions blaming England for its treatment of the colonies, and was asked to (and did) draft the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson succeeded Patrick Henry as Virginia Governor, then in 1789 was named Washington's Secretary of State. In 1796 he ran for President, but came in second to John Adams, thus becoming Vice President. In 1800 he ran again, beat Adams, but tied in the electoral college with Aaron Burr. When Congress broke the tie in his favor, he became the third President of the United States. In 1803 he took perhaps his most important action when he purchased the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon, doubling the country's size.

Jefferson was President from 1801 to 1809 during which the Mississippi Territory and "Old" Madison County were created.

After his Presidency, Jefferson retired to Monticello where there are many examples of his inventiveness: a weathervane that can be read inside, a clock with faces inside and out, dumbwaiters, and his bed that could be raised when not in use. He devised a copy machine, invented a revolving music stand, improved agriculture. He read classics in their original French, Spanish, Italian, or Greek. He conceived the

## **6. Downtown Huntsville Streets**

University of Virginia, got it located in his own county, designed its buildings, hired the faculty, and served as its first regent.

In one of the great coincidences of history, Jefferson and John Adams both died on the same day - July 4, 1823 - exactly 50 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

**LINCOLN STREET.** Lincoln Street was named much too early to have been named for Abraham. Instead it is named for Benjamin - no relation.

Benjamin Lincoln was a major general in the Massachusetts militia, then in the Continental Army. He played a large role in the victory at Saratoga, but was wounded. When he recuperated, he was sent by General Washington to defend Savannah, finally had to surrender at Charleston. He was exchanged for a British officer, and led the American army down to Yorktown, where it is said he accepted British General Charles O'Hara's sword in the surrender that ended the war.

**LOWE AVENUE.** Lowes have been active in the city from its earliest days. Bartlett M. Lowe was a merchant, the rector of the Huntsville Military Scientific and Classical School that opened in 1832, and president of the Huntsville branch of the Bank of the State of Alabama in 1835. William Manning Lowe was born in Huntsville in 1842, was a member of the Alabama Legislature in 1870, and served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1879 until his death in 1882. Lawyer Robert Joseph Lowe was also born in Huntsville, in 1861, was a member of the Alabama Legislature from 1886 to 1889, and helped write the state constitution of 1901. And in 1900 the Lowe Manufacturing Company was incorporated in Huntsville, and its mill became operational in 1901 in what is now West Huntsville. The mill was named for Arthur M. Lowe of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, who held controlling interest until he sold out in 1907. The mill

## 6. Downtown Huntsville Streets

operated under various owners and management until 1937. There are still more successful Lowes who could be included here. It must have been just a popular name, as I haven't found a record of Lowe Avenue being named to honor any specific one of the above.

**MADISON STREET.** Like the county, the street is named for James Madison, the fourth President of the United States, who served from 1809 to 1817. One of Madison's first actions in 1809 was to have a census of Madison County conducted, followed by the first government sale of land that became the city of Huntsville.

Madison was born in Virginia in 1751, went to what is now Princeton University. He served on the Virginia council of state under Governors Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson, and in 1779 was elected to the Continental Congress. By the time he retired in 1783, he was thought of as its most effective legislator. He was an advocate of a strong central government, strong executive, independent court system, and bicameral legislature, with built-in checks and balances. He's known as the "Father of the Constitution" and is credited with wording much of it. In 1808 he succeeded Jefferson to the Presidency, and was re-elected in 1812, leading the country through its war with Britain. Madison died in 1836.

**MCCLUNG AVENUE.** The avenue was opened in 1825 and named for James White McClung. He was educated in Tennessee and North Carolina. As soon as he received his law degree, he settled in Huntsville. At various times from 1822 to 1844, he was a member of the Alabama Legislature, and from 1835 to 1838 he was Speaker of the House. Then from 1845 to his death in 1849, McClung served in the Alabama Senate. This apparently was the first Huntsville street named for a local person.

**MONROE STREET.** Damill Castello Monroe came to Huntsville in 1886. He married Elizabeth Strove in 1892,

## 6. Downtown Huntsville Streets

and they had four sons. The family became well known in Huntsville for operating Monroe Printing Company, Monroe Office Supply, and subsequent endeavors. Although their businesses were nearby, according to historians, Monroe Street is not named for this local Monroe family.

The street, like others downtown, is named for a U.S. President, in this case, President James Monroe, who held that office from 1817 to 1825. Monroe fought in the Revolutionary War, studied law under Thomas Jefferson, and served as U.S. Senator from, and as Governor of, Virginia. President Jefferson sent Monroe to France to negotiate purchase of New Orleans only to have him find Napoleon ready to sell the entire Louisiana Territory; a quick negotiation was completed. President Madison named Monroe Secretary of State, later Secretary of War. As President, Monroe is best known for the Monroe Doctrine, supporting the independence of Spain's Latin American colonies. Monroe died in 1831.

Monroe was the last of the Revolutionary War heroes to serve high office.

**RANDOLPH STREET** is named for John Randolph of Virginia. Randolph was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1799 where he served almost continuously for 30 years. He was a noted orator, advocate of states' rights, and a supporter of slavery.

**SPRAGINS STREET.** If you continue driving west from the north side of the courthouse square, down the steep hill, you run into Spragins Street, at a point that is the closest you can get to see the Big Spring without getting out of your car. The street is named for one of Huntsville's oldest and most recognized families.

About 1820, Malchijah E. Spragins, with his brother Stith Bolling Spragins, moved with his mother Rebecca Bolling Spragins into Madison County, near Huntsville.

## 6. Downtown Huntsville Streets

Perhaps most famous - maybe typical - of the Spragins family is Malchijah's grandson, Robert Elias Spragins, born in 1861. A lawyer, banker, businessman, and county attorney, he formed the Huntsville Ice and Coal Company, took over the Huntsville Electric Light and Power Company, bought the Huntsville Gas Company, was a major investor in the Lincoln Mill, and was director of the First National Bank - to name just some of his business affairs. In 1901 he was named to the state constitutional convention. In 1903 he was elected state senator and served four consecutive terms. In the 1920s, he was president of the State Highway Commission. He was repeatedly urged to run for Governor, but declined. Robert E. Spragins died in 1935.

**ST. CLAIR AVENUE.** St. Clair Lane, Place, Drive, and Cemetery, all off of Maysville Road in the eastern part of the county, are named for St. Clairs that settled in the Hurricane Creek valley area. George St. Clair was first to arrive, in the early 1800s. He and his wife had six sons and a daughter, and one of the sons, John Henry, got a wagon and mule and provided the area with its first rolling store. Later he built a store at what is now the intersection of County Lake and Hurricane Creek Roads. He eventually expanded further, owning thousands of acres of mountain land, and running sawmill and coal businesses, then a gin that served the valley, finally a third store. **John St. Clair Road** near Greenfield is named for him. Perhaps St. Clair Avenue, just north of Huntsville Hospital, is named for these St. Clairs.

Or maybe the avenue is named for Arthur St. Clair. He fought during the Revolution, was with General Washington at Valley Forge, served as a president of the Continental Congress, and was Governor of the Northwest Territory from 1787 to 1802. Alabama's St. Clair County is named for him.

Or perhaps it was just a name the street department came up with.

## **6. Downtown Huntsville Streets**

**WASHINGTON STREET.** The street is named for George Washington (1732-1799).

Washington was a Virginia farmer, surveyor, colonel during the French and Indian War, commander of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, political leader afterwards, chairman of the Constitutional Convention, and first President of the United States. Washington served two terms before retiring to his home at Mount Vernon. His achievements as President include building the executive branch of the government, and selecting the site for the capital city that bears his name.

**WILLIAMS STREET** is named for Robert Williams, who was Governor of the Mississippi Territory from 1805 to 1809. It was Williams who made the proclamation on December 13, 1808, that created "Old" Madison County as part of the Territory.

## 7. AVENUES IN HUNTSVILLE'S FIVE POINTS DISTRICT

In the 1880s, Huntsville was a small town of less than 5,000 people, still suffering from the Reconstruction that followed the Civil War. But it had a potential for growth, and local businessmen joined together to take that message to northern industrialists. Two in particular responded: the O'Shaughnessy brothers. In 1886 they, along with eighteen local business investors, organized the North Alabama Improvement Company. It was a pioneer organization similar to today's Chamber of Commerce in its promotion of the city and its businesses. It was also a corporation designed to make money through real estate ventures. One such venture was the acquisition of 2,000 acres for an East Huntsville Addition. The area was platted in 1888, and by 1889, lots were sold.

About that time, three businessmen from South Dakota came to Huntsville. They were Tracy W. Pratt, William I. Wellman, and William S. Wells. In South Dakota they, along with James A. Ward, had formed the Northwestern (sometimes written North West) Land Association. The Association bought almost the entire East Huntsville Addition from the North Alabama Improvement Company - almost all because it did not include a western portion that had been deeded to the Dallas Mill, then under construction (see **Dallas Street**).

The Addition was replatted in 1892. The avenues that ran east and west were named for Company directors and prominent local citizens; streets that ran north and south were numbered. The avenues retain most of their original 1892 names today. The streets, on the other hand, got their names in the Ordinance of 1958 that renamed roads throughout the city.

## 7. Avenues in Five Points

The three “Yankee businessmen” were joined in their endeavors by three local men, Milton Humes, J.R. Stevens, and Charles H. Halsey. Elizabeth Chapman in her book writes about the group: “They were a city-building and manufacturing group. ... The history of the next eight years is permeated with their ideas. There is hardly an important transaction that they do not direct, not all of them at once, but some of them all the time. Their names appear as agents to secure mills for the Chamber of Commerce, as realtors, developing waste lands or destroying old property for new business. They appear as chairmen of town meetings, and finally, as the directors and presidents of the Chamber of Commerce.”

The East Huntsville **Five Points** area of today gets its name from the intersection of Andrew Jackson Way, Pratt Avenue, and Holmes Avenue and the five points of land they create. In 1999 the City created the **Five Points Historic District**, between Ward Avenue on the north and Wells Avenue on the south, and Russell Street on the west and Grayson Street on the east. About 35 homes in the area now have markers identifying original owners and dates of construction.

**ANDREW JACKSON WAY.** Originally Fifth Street, this has since been named for Andrew Jackson, seventh President of the United States, who served from 1829 to 1837. Long before that, General Jackson acquired a lot of land in Madison County, and he frequently visited the area. He particularly liked the Old Green Bottom Inn where he “raced his horses and fought his cocks.” Site of that inn is now part of Alabama A&M University.

**BEIRNE AVENUE.** The 1892 plat map of the East Huntsville Addition, developed by the Northwestern Land Association, shows Bierne Avenue. An old postcard shows the Bierne home. Both are apparently misspellings. The correct name is Beirne.

## 7. Avenues in Five Points

In 1793, Andrew O'Beirne came to Virginia from Ireland, and dropped the O. He married Elener Kenan, and they had seven children, one of whom was George. I'm told the street is probably named for George.

In 1842, by then in Huntsville, George Plunket Beirne was elected alderman, then the next year elected mayor. For 1849 and 1850, he was re-elected mayor. He was a director of the Northern Bank of Alabama, later the First National Bank of Huntsville. He was also on the board of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. He owned a fine home on Williams Street and land south of the city. George died in 1881 at age 72.

According to the family history, he had married Eliza G. Carter (Fred Simpson lists her as Eliza Carter Gray), and they had a daughter, Jane. She inherited George's home and land. But she never married. She lived until 1918.

One Beirne family write-up (by Martha Patton Darwin) says George had nine children, but provides no details or dates. Another (by William Echols Spragins) says that since George had no son, the Beirne family in Alabama ended with spinster daughter Jane.

**DALLAS STREET.** Dallas Street and the Dallas Mill from which it took its name are not directly connected with Dallas, Texas - although the name is from the same Dallas family. Dallas Mill in Huntsville was named after its principal stockholder, Trevanion B. Dallas of Nashville. The mill began operation in 1892 and was Alabama's largest cotton mill, manufacturing sheeting. Dallas was treasurer and general manager of the facility until 1902. The mill operated until 1949.

George Dallas, for whom the Texas city is named, was Trevanion's uncle. George was U.S. Vice President during the War with Mexico.

## **7. Avenues in Five Points**

**HALSEY AVENUE.** Charles H. Halsey and his brother William Leroy opened their grocery business on Jefferson Street in 1879. It expanded and added a Madison location in 1972. The **Halsey Grocery Company** continues in business today, in its building dated 1904 on Jefferson Street.

Charles Halsey was general manager of the North Alabama Improvement Company. Later, he was one of three local businessmen who joined in the Northwestern Land Association partnership.

**HUMES AVENUE.** Three local businessmen joined in the Northwestern Land Association partnership. Lawyer Milton Humes was one. He served as the group's only attorney.

Humes was originally from Virginia and had come to Huntsville after the Civil War. He had been a Confederate captain and had lost both of his legs fighting General Sherman. He was admitted to the bar in 1866, practiced law in Huntsville all his life, and in 1888 and 1889 was president of the state bar association. He died in 1908.

**MCCULLOUGH AVENUE.** Patricia Ryan wrote that Augustus W. McCullough was a Huntsville court clerk. Elise Stephens wrote about him as a member of the executive committee of the local labor union and as "a school teaching carpetbagger with staying power who made the transition from bagger to community builder." For 1870-1871, he was a trustee for Alabama A&M. The 1896-1897 city directory lists him as U.S. Commissioner and special master, Memphis & Charleston Railroad, with his home on Meridian Pike. He was also an investor and participant in the North Alabama Improvement Company.

**MCKINLEY AVENUE.** This is the northern most street in the Five Points area before Oakwood Avenue. The avenue was originally platted as Melette Avenue, but the name was changed to honor President William McKinley (1843-1901),

## 7. Avenues in Five Points

25th President of the United States. McKinley had won reelection in the election of 1900 and was inaugurated for the second time in March 1901. That same year, in April, McKinley's train stopped in Huntsville, and a large crowd greeted the President. Then in September, McKinley went to Buffalo, New York, to attend the Pan American Exhibition. He was shot there by an anarchist and died eight days later.

**O'SHAUGHNESSY AVENUE.** It wasn't until the 1870s that industrialized textile manufacturing, i.e., the big cotton mills, came to Huntsville. Michael and James F. O'Shaughnessy's father had made a fortune in Cincinnati, and his two sons came to Nashville where they built one of the South's first cottonseed oil factories. In 1881, they opened the Huntsville Cotton Oil Mill and eventually controlled oil mills throughout Alabama, had a refinery in Brooklyn, and shipped oil as far away as Europe.

It was Michael who moved to Huntsville and built the home known as Kildare where he had foxhounds and horses. (Kildare was later sold to the Cyrus McCormick family and known for some time as the McCormick House. It still stands, a block from Oakwood Avenue and Meridian Pike.)

In 1886 the brothers along with local businessmen formed the North Alabama Improvement Company. In 1890, with "outside" financing, the group brought Dallas Mill to the city. But also by 1890, O'Shaughnessy expenses were overrunning income. James had, for example, invested heavily in building a failing canal across Nicaragua. In 1892 the brothers had to sell out, in a six million dollar deal, to the Northwestern Land Association run by South Dakota businessmen Pratt, Ward, Wellman, and Wells. At this point Michael and his family left the city.

**PRATT AVENUE.** Tracy Wilder Pratt was born in 1861, grew up in Minnesota, and later moved to Pierre, South Dakota, where he became a newspaper editor, successful real estate and insurance man, even state representative. He

## 7. Avenues in Five Points

moved to Huntsville in the 1890s and lived here until his death in 1928. He was vice president of the Northwestern Land Association.

Pratt's obituary stated "he was responsible for more major industries locating in Huntsville than any other man who ever resided here, and he was often called 'Huntsville's First Citizen.' He was a member of and identified with practically every civic, social, fraternal, patriotic, and business organization in Huntsville." Lane Lambert summed him up as "the founder of one cotton mill, a force behind two others, the principal investor in the city's first public transportation [street car] service, and a sort of one-man Chamber of Commerce for the town."

**RISON AVENUE.** The W.R. Rison Banking Company went into business in 1866, weathered the bank panic of 1873, and grew to be the largest bank in the city. Rison was serving as its president in 1900, and when Trevanion Dallas died in 1902, Rison became manager of the Dallas Mill. In 1904, he was succeeded by his son, Archie L. Rison, who held the post until 1925.

William R. Rison was also vice-president of the Huntsville Land Company, which developed the land near Dallas Mills for residential use. Oscar Goldsmith was that company's president, and the development was originally named Lawrence Village for Goldsmith's young son. (See **Goldsmith-Schiffman Field.**)

**STEVENS AVENUE.** Three local businessmen joined in the Northwestern Land Association partnership. J. R. Stevens, ex-Confederate major, was one. He had become president of the National Bank of Huntsville in 1882, and had been treasurer of the North Alabama Improvement Company.

**WARD AVENUE.** James A. Ward was one of the group of South Dakotans who formed the Northwestern Land

## 7. Avenues in Five Points

Association. Ward was a lawyer and railroad speculator. He served as the group's treasurer. Of the four South Dakotans, he is the one who never moved to Huntsville.

**WELLMAN AVENUE.** William I. Wellman, like Tracy Pratt, was from Minnesota but moved to South Dakota where he allied himself with Pratt and became a successful real estate and insurance man. He moved to Huntsville with Pratt and Wells. He served as secretary of the Northwestern Land Association.

Wellman was also the first president of the Farmers and Merchants Bank, owned a furniture company, bought and sold real estate throughout the county, and formed the Boyd & Wellman real estate firm that subdivided lots and constructed housing. In the early twentieth century, Wellman also served as chairman of the state Republican Party.

In 1915, Wellman and his wife Helen gave the little triangular area (one of the "points" at Five Points) between Pratt and Holmes Avenues to the city for use as a park. It took until 2002 for the park to be landscaped and finally officially named **Wellman Family Park**.

**WELLS AVENUE.** William S. Wells hailed from Elmira, New York, but moved to Pierre, South Dakota. He owned the Wells House there, and was president of the Pierre, Duluth, and Black Hills Railway. He moved to Huntsville with Pratt and Wellman, and was president of the Northwestern Land Association. Wells' impact on Huntsville was limited, as he died in 1900. His obituary stated that "he was a banker, contractor, builder, stock raiser, and livery man."

## 8. MORE HUNTSVILLE STREETS

**AIRPORT ROAD.** Airport Road leads to **John Hunt Park**, the municipal golf course, and several city buildings, all of which occupy the area of the old Huntsville airport. The old airport served the area until the 1970s - with long-gone carriers like Capitol Airlines, Southern Airways, and Eastern Airlines. (For information about the new airport, see **James Record Road**.)

**ALAN B. SHEPARD HIGHWAY.** Interstate 565 in Huntsville has been named the Admiral Alan B. Shepard Highway.

Alan Bartlett Shepard, Jr., was born in New Hampshire in 1923 and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1944. He served on a destroyer in World War II, and afterwards took flight training and became a test pilot. In 1959, he was chosen as one of the first group of astronauts. On May 17, 1961, Shepard became the first American in space by traveling up 117 miles atop a Redstone rocket in the Freedom 7 capsule. In 1971 he went on to captain Apollo 14 and conduct geological experiments on the surface of the moon. That same year he was made a rear admiral, first astronaut to be awarded that high a rank. Shepard died in 1998.

**BAILEY COVE ROAD.** Joseph Franklin Bailey was born in 1816 in the Mississippi Territory. He married Frances Maria Flippo in 1841. By 1850 they were listed as living in Madison County. They had eight sons, of which Lewis Winston Bailey, born in 1845, was one. He married Georgian Mary M. McCay in 1868. In 1879 the couple purchased 287 acres due east of the original Four Mile Post Road, and it is for this couple and that place that Bailey Cove is named. Lewis Bailey died in 1924.

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

**BANKHEAD PARKWAY.** This road up the north side of Monte Sano Mountain is named for William Bankhead.

John Hollis Bankhead (1842-1920), from Lamar County, Alabama, served as a Confederate captain, later became U.S. Representative from 1887 to 1907, then U.S. Senator from Alabama from 1907 to his death in 1920. Among his achievements, he helped develop the U.S. highway system and as a result had his name given to the first transcontinental road across the country from Washington, D.C., to San Diego, California: the **Bankhead Highway**. One son, John Hollis, Jr. (1872-1946), also from Lamar County and a lawyer, was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1930 and served there the rest of his life.

But it was the first son, William Brockman Bankhead, who in 1895 came to Huntsville to practice law. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1916 while his father was Senator - an unprecedented event. In 1933 he chaired the House Rules Committee, by 1934 he was Majority Leader, and in 1936 he became Speaker of the House. In 1940, just before his death, he was the keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention.

William had two daughters, one of whom was actress Tallulah Brockman Bankhead, born in Huntsville in 1903.

**BIDE-A-WEE DRIVE.** When I mentioned I was working on this book, someone said he sure wished I'd include and explain northeast Huntsville's Bide-A-Wee Drive. So here it is. It's Scottish, and to a Scot, the name means "stay a little longer" or "linger awhile." A literal translation might be "stay a while."

**BLEVINS GAP ROAD.** Dillon Blevins and sons John and William arrived in the area in the early 1800s, and in 1809 the sons bought land along what is now Whitesburg Drive. They bought more land in 1810 and 1811, including some east of Green Mountain in Little Cove. Then the family

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

bought the gap for easy access across the mountains between their lands. There are references to people crossing at the gap as early as the 1820s, and the road is clearly shown on the Madison County map of 1850. For many years it continued as the main road east over the mountains. Almost 200 years later, Huntsville's latest road in that area, **Cecil Ashburn Drive**, uses the same mountain gap.

**BLUE SPRINGS ROAD.** An 1861 Hartley-Drayton map shows a branch, labeled Blue Spring Branch, of the creek that flowed just west of downtown - what is today called Pinhook Creek. An 1865 military map shows what appears to be a pond labeled Blue Spring in the same location - west of the city between Holmes and Clinton Streets. Since no Blue family appears in the census records around that time, the spring must have been named for its color. (The John Blue factory did not come to the city until 1946.) Blue Springs Road has its southern terminus at Oakwood Avenue, far north of today's Holmes Avenue, but still likely takes its name from the spring or springs that once existed.

**BOB WALLACE AVENUE.** This was originally 13th Avenue, West. The name was changed along with hundreds of others in the Ordinance of 1958 that changed street names throughout the city. Bob Wallace was the son of the sister of a developer who was then building in the area. The name has nothing to do with former Alabama Governor George Wallace.

**BYRD SPRING ROAD.** Byrd Spring is part of the Indian Creek waterway that runs from Big Spring to the Tennessee River, and this South Huntsville road runs west from Whitesburg Drive to the woods that surround the spring.

The Strobridge & Co. map of 1875 clearly has the area marked "Bird's Spring." An article in *Old Huntsville* magazine (No. 95) tells of a body being found at "Bird's Spring" on land owned by S.W. Harris in 1888. The *Weekly Community Newspaper* of March 2, 1922, tells

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

when a group of 25 businessmen, with Jeff Terry, treasurer, organized the “Bird Spring Gun and Rodd Club” by buying over 400 acres at the site (but not the spring itself), owned by Robert Crawford of Fayetteville. (The club is still active.) When or why the “i” got changed to a “y” is unclear.

John Hays told me the story of the road itself: Between 1910 and 1920, land south of the spring was owned by Elgie Hays. It was rented to a logger who set up a saw mill and used oxen to access the marsh and its stand of tupelo trees. To make a road in and out, he felled trees on one side of the would-be road to fall onto the road site, and cut trees on the other side that way too, so that the fallen trees criss-crossed. Dirt was packed down on top, thus forming a log causeway into the marsh - and the start of today’s Byrd Spring Road.

From what I could find, no one named Bird or Byrd ever owned the land at or around the spring. Indeed, courthouse records show that lands in the area were originally purchased in 1809 and 1812 by someone named Peregrin Falconer. Sure sounds like a “bird” name to me.

(Falconer was not as strange a name as it might sound. In 1820 Joshua Falconer was one of the original businessmen on the courthouse square, with a business at the corner of South Side Courthouse Square and Madison Street.)

**CALIFORNIA STREET.** In the introduction to *Maple Hill Cemetery, Phase One*, Frances Roberts wrote “Forced to sell land by pressing creditors, ... LeRoy Pope Walker was directed by the court to divide much of his Uncle’s [sic] property adjacent to the City into lots and streets. This appears to be the origins of White and California Streets.”

Dr. Roberts was addressing the cemetery layout, not the specific street names. Still, the year was 1849, year of the California gold rush. Unlike **White Street**, on which Thomas W. White resided, there was no one by the name of California. It’s a guess that gold rush fever and perhaps

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

wishful thinking hit someone in Huntsville at that time to produce this street name.

**CARL T. JONES DRIVE.** George Washington Jones served as a major in the Confederate army. A year after the war ended, a son, George Walter Jones, known as G.W., was born. In 1886, G.W. founded the civil engineering firm that bears his name. In 1890 G.W. married Elvalena Moore, and they had five sons and a daughter.

About 1939, sons Edwin and Carl purchased the 2500-acre Garth farm (see **Garth Road**) and its 1823 house south of Huntsville, an area now known as **Jones Valley**. After World War II they made the farm a success, raising cattle (originally brought in from Texas) and producing seed (Certified Ky-31 Fescue). In the 1950s and 1960s Carl also served as one of the partners of G.W. Jones & Sons, did engineering projects, and became a dynamic community leader especially recognized for bringing industries to Huntsville. One of the engineering efforts for which Carl was particularly recognized is design of the Huntsville International Airport field, which is named for him (see **James Record Road**, below).

Carl T. Jones Drive crosses Jones Valley, connecting **Airport Road** with **Bailey Cove Road**.

**CECIL FAIN DRIVE.** The road that leads from Winchester Road to J.O. Johnson High School is named for Cecil Vincent Fain, Huntsville teacher, coach, and principal for over 50 years. He was also active in many civic organizations and headed several of them.

Fain served as principal at eight schools, including Lee High School, but is best remembered as principal of Rison High School, where he served for 32 years. Several area firsts are attributed to him: first student safety patrol, state spelling bee, PTA, Boy Scout troop - even the county's first American Legion Post. Fain also coached - baseball,

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

football, basketball, track, and tennis. Indeed, for 40 years, he was known locally as "Mr. Tennis." Cecil Fain died in 1992 at age 96.

**DRAKE AVENUE.** Revolutionary War soldier John Drake (of New Jersey) and his wife Jane Neely (from Virginia) had ten children, who gave them 68 grandchildren. John and family members moved to Madison County between 1807 and 1811, and by 1815 had purchased land in Drake's Cove, now known as Jones Valley (see **Carl T. Jones Drive**).

Other members of the family settled east of Monte Sano, near what is now Big Cove - hence **King Drake Road** and **Drake Mountain** in that area. Some must have also owned land north of the city, as the mountain there that is being destroyed for gravel is another **Drake Mountain**.

Drakes owned land along the road in Huntsville that bears their name, as well as in the valley and further south along Whitesburg Drive. In 1881 the Drakes sold the valley farm to Winston W. Garth (see **Garth Road**), and in 1940, Edwin and Carl Jones purchased it from the Garth estate. The original home on Garth Road, now owned by Jones descendants, was built by James Drake in the 1820s.

**FOUR MILE POST ROAD.** The term "post road" can refer to a road used for the delivery of mail. The first such road in the country ran from Boston to New York in 1673. By the late 1700s, when Benjamin Franklin was Postmaster General, milestones were set out on routes run by post riders, as they were paid by the mile. But Four Mile Post Road is not such a postal road.

The term can also refer to a road marked by a post or posts. Roads, with posts in place at regular intervals, were used by pioneers, especially in the north, where deep snow could obliterate trails without such manmade landmarks. There was such a post, on the northeast corner of the intersection

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

of Four Mile Post Road and Whitesburg Drive, marking four miles from the courthouse in downtown Huntsville.

**GARTH ROAD.** Winston Fearn Garth was born in the Fearn-Garth home on Franklin Street in 1856, son of William Willis and Maria Fearn Garth. Winston graduated from University of the South at Sewanee and studied law at the University of Virginia, but because of his health, he had to retire.

In 1881 his father bought the Drake farm (see **Drake Avenue**). In 1883 Winston married Lena Garth, daughter of Horace E. Garth, president of the Mechanics Bank of New York City. They lived in a new home that they called Piedmont on Whitesburg Drive, which was just over the hill from the farm. Winston became prominent as a breeder of harness horses. He also was active in politics, as chairman of the Madison County Democratic Committee, on the Governor's staff, and from 1922 to 1926, as state senator. He died in 1933.

In 1939 the farm was sold to the Jones family (see **Carl T. Jones Drive**). Piedmont no longer exists - it burned down in the 1930s. Garth Road runs along the west side of what once was Garth farm, now known as **Jones Valley**.

**GOVERNORS DRIVE.** Some politicians wanted to name this avenue to honor Governor James E. "Big Jim" Folsom, but he declined and recommended it honor all Alabama governors. One newspaper write-up says it honors those governors who contributed to the building of roads in Madison County, another says it honors the nine Alabama governors who came from Madison County. For whatever purpose, Fifth Avenue was changed to Governors Drive in 1958.

**HOBBS ISLAND ROAD AND HOBBS ROAD.** These are named for early settler John Hobbs and the Hobbs family. See **Hobbs Island**.

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

**JAMES RECORD ROAD.** This road runs across the north part of Huntsville International Airport.

In 1948 James Record was named county clerk auditor, the county's highest position at the time. From 1962 to 1981, he served four terms and 19 years as chairman of the Madison County Commission, at one time receiving the largest number of votes of anyone in county history. It was a time when thousands of new residents arrived to work at Redstone Arsenal and NASA, and the city and county successfully expanded services accordingly, including the opening of the airport, which was dedicated in 1968.

Upon retirement Record continued involvement on the boards of numerous charitable and state organizations, including the Alabama Historical Commission. One of his most lasting achievements was the writing of a history of Madison County. (See **Bibliography**.) Record died in 1996 at age 79.

There are two other named roads at the airport. The roads in and out form the **Glenn Hearn Parkway**. A parallel road is **Houston Goodson Way**. Hearn was mayor of Huntsville and Goodson was president of the city council at the time the airport was built.

And at G.W. Jones & Sons, one of Carl T. Jones' most complicated engineering projects was that of designing the airport field, and for his success, the air field itself is named **Carl T. Jones Field**. (See **Carl T. Jones Drive**.)

**JORDAN LANE.** According to a DAR paper in the Heritage Room, this street was named for Bartholomew (Batt) Jordan, a Revolutionary War soldier and early settler. The paper goes on to say that Jordan died in 1842 and is buried in Jordan Cemetery on Redstone Arsenal, one of many small family cemeteries on the Arsenal.

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

**LEEMAN FERRY ROAD.** The road is named for early settler William Lehman, who had stock pens, a ferry, and cabins on both sides of the Tennessee River a few miles below Ditto's Landing. An 1875 Madison County map (by Strobridge & Co., Cincinnati) shows a Leeman Ferry Road leading from Huntsville all the way to the Tennessee River, between Hobbs Island and Triana.

Usually spelled Leeman, his real name was Lehman, according to a *Huntsville Times* article by Lee Green. Also, TVA maps of the Tennessee River available via the Internet label an area nearby as Lehman's Bluff.

**LILY FLAGG ROAD.** One of Huntsville's legends is that, in 1892 Gen. Samuel H. Moore took his prize Jersey cow, Lily Flagg, to the Chicago World's Fair where it was pronounced the world's greatest butter producer, then returned home to hold a big celebration. But it's not quite true.

Here's the real story: The cow was part of a dairy on Maysville Road in northeast Huntsville. To promote its breed, the American Jersey Cattle Club gave awards to its best producers. In 1892, club officials came to Huntsville and measured Lily Flagg's butter output (1,047 pounds that year) and named her champion butter producer. To celebrate her success, Moore, who owned the cow, really did hold a reception in her honor. It was at his home on Adams Street. Formal invitations were sent, a greeting line extended past the cow that was on display, an orchestra played, and the party lasted until dawn. The following year, Moore took her to the Chicago World's Fair, but she was mishandled and didn't produce enough milk to enter competition. He sold her to a Massachusetts dairy, and she never returned to Huntsville.

And the book of the fair, the Colombian Exposition of 1893, pictures "Lilly (Signal) Flag" - apparently the original spelling of her name.

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

Dr. David Moore had bought considerable land at the first land sales in the county in 1809. His son, Gen. Samuel H. Moore, eventually owned several plantations in the area. The son was also director of the Memphis-Chattanooga & St. Louis Railroad. When the railroad put a stop south of Huntsville, Moore named it after his cow, thus the area and road now known as Lily Flagg.

**MASTIN LAKE ROAD.** Captain Francis T. Mastin was a planter who came to Alabama from Maryland as an aide to General Andrew Jackson during the Indian wars that followed the War of 1812. In 1823 Mastin bought a lot on Williams Street from Clement C. Clay for his home. He and his wife, Ann LeVert Mastin, had two sons, William and Ed, and by the mid-1800s, Mastins owned much land in both the city and county. Some of that land was north of Huntsville around the street that today bears their name.

And, yes, there had also been a lake there. It is no more - there's only a drainage ditch - but nearby names of **Lakewood Park** and **Lakeview Drive** attest to its one-time existence.

**MEDARIS DRIVE.** Ohioan John Bruce Medaris served in the Marine Corps during World War I and in the Army Ordnance Corps during World War II. In 1955 he was promoted to major general and assigned as the first commanding general of the Army Ballistic Missile Agency at Redstone Arsenal. As such he led the team of German and American rocket engineers as the U.S. entered space in 1957 with the launch of the Explorer I satellite atop an Army Jupiter C missile.

In 1958 Medaris was made commanding general of the Ordnance Missile Command, which included not only all of Redstone Arsenal, but the White Sands Missile Range, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and responsibility for all Army Ordnance rockets, guided and ballistic missiles, and space activities. That last resulted in Commander Alan B. Shepard

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

being carried by a Mercury-Redstone on the first suborbital flight around the Earth.

Medaris retired from the military in 1960. In 1970, he became an Anglican priest, serving in North Carolina. He died in 1990 at age 88. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

**MEMORIAL PARKWAY.** When it was first built in the 1950s and 1960s, the parkway honored soldiers killed during World War II. It now commemorates soldiers from all U.S. wars.

**MERIDIAN STREET.** Lands of Georgia originally extended all the way to the Mississippi River. In 1802, Georgia ceded the Mississippi Territory to the federal government. The territory had to be surveyed and platted before the lands could be opened for purchase under the administration of the federal government. Sometime between 1807 and 1809 the part of the territory that was to become Alabama was surveyed. Surveyor was Major Thomas Freeman, deputy U.S. surveyor. A base line or meridian had to be established for the state. It was known as the Huntsville Meridian, and part of it ran from the Tennessee border south to Huntsville along what is now U.S. 231 and the street that bears its name.

**PATTON ROAD.** Patton Road extends through Redstone Arsenal, north until it becomes Jordan Lane. It is named for the Patton family, which started here when William came from Virginia to start a merchandising business in 1812. He was a member of the firm Beirne & Patton, founded the **Bell Factory**, and operated his business as well as two plantations in Alabama and another in Mississippi. He and his wife, Martha Lee Hayes, had nine children.

Most of the Patton children became successful as planters and merchants. Charles Patton (1806-1866) became a Huntsville doctor. Most famous was Robert Miller Patton,

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

educated at Green Academy, elected to the Alabama legislature, president of the Alabama Senate, and in 1865, elected Governor. Robert died in 1885.

Historians at Redstone Arsenal have a different source for the Patton Road name. See **Huntsville Arsenal CWS Roads**.

**PULASKI PIKE.** This was one of the first roads in the county, and the only road between Huntsville and Pulaski, Tennessee, from which it takes its name.

Casimir Pulaski was a Lithuanian who had served in the Polish army, met Benjamin Franklin, and volunteered his services to the American cause in the Revolutionary War. He was made a brigadier general and commanded what became known as Pulaski's Legion. Pulaski was wounded and died at Savannah, Georgia.

**SPARKMAN DRIVE.** The drive is named for Senator John Sparkman. See **Sparkman High School**.

**WEATHERLY ROAD.** In 1823 Peter Weatherly, from Berwickshire, Scotland, purchased land just south of the road that bears the Weatherly name and east beyond what is now Bailey Cove Road. He built a log cabin and began farming. Peter died in 1872 and his lands passed to his great nephew, also named Peter. This Peter and his wife, Sarah Bache Weatherly, also farmed the lands successfully. Cotton was their primary crop. They had nine children. Weatherly farm lands were eventually sold to developers, the last in 1986.

**WHITESBURG DRIVE.** James White owned iron works and salt factories in East Tennessee. He traded salt for land and thus owned a lot of land on both sides of the Tennessee River. Salt was in demand for a variety of uses, including preservation of meats, and White eventually established a monopoly for salt - so much so that he became known as

## 8. More Huntsville Streets

“Salt” White. By 1825, the Ditto’s Landing area had become known as Whitesburg. The Whitesburg community that grew up in the area was burned and destroyed by Union forces during the Civil War and never revived.

Whitesburg Drive, between Huntsville and the Tennessee River, opened in 1834 as a toll road. It operated that way until 1895 when a state commission outlawed the charges.

**WYNN DRIVE.** This is the major street through Cummings Research Park and running north to Oakwood College.

Virginians John and Polly Wynne (and there are various spellings of Wynn) settled near South Pittsburgh, Tennessee. From there, grandchildren and great grandchildren “moved all over northern Alabama and into other states. Huntsville has its share of early Wynn families and even has a Wynn Drive named for one of them.” That was John P. Rankin writing about the Wynn family for *The Heritage of Madison County*.



This center, a community, a major street, a high school,  
and a housing area all have his name.  
He's likely the person with the most named memorials here.  
See page 96.



A nice country scene? Or county scene?  
No, it's right in the middle of Huntsville.  
See page 56.



**This strange building  
is a replica  
of what was once  
its city hall.  
The town story  
starts on page 31.**



**This isn't a drainage ditch, it's a creek,  
and it's named after the town barber.  
See pages 21-22.**



The biggest stadium in the area  
is at Alabama A&M University.  
Who's it named for?  
See pages 86-87 to find out.

This Huntsville  
landmark  
is named for the  
president of the  
old Studebaker  
Corporation  
of South Bend,  
Indiana.  
Find out why  
on pages 79-80.





**Lincoln Street in downtown Huntsville.  
Unlike Washington, Jefferson, and Madison,  
it's not named for a president.  
Find the story on page 40.**



**Here are the two main mountains on Redstone Arsenal.  
The one on the left is called Madkin Mountain.  
But maybe it shouldn't be.  
See pages 22-23.**

### 9. PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

The area has many fine parks and recreation facilities. Here I've included only those named for persons whose names do not appear elsewhere in this book. Information has been hard to come by. In general, there are no explanatory plaques at the parks or facilities themselves, and there is no apparent set of records telling for whom or why many were named.

**BERACHAH GYM.** This recreation center on Sparkman Drive used to be a church. When the city took it over, it kept the name. Berachah is a Hebrew name, appearing in the Bible in I Chronicles 12, and that of one of the warriors who joined to help David at Ziklag. The name is fitting for the gym, as the warriors were fine athletes, ambidextrous in archery and with slings.

**BILLY HUNTER PARK.** About 25 years ago, Billy Hunter let softball players play ball on some acres he owned in Hazel Green. In 1979 he helped build the first real ball field. Hunter, whose business was the Tall Pines Construction Company, became a sports fan and regular spectator. As years went by, more fields were added. About 1992 the county bought 20 acres beside Hunter's property. Then a few years ago the Hazel Green Athletic Association bought 40 more acres of Hunter's land. Now there are several baseball, softball, football, and soccer fields - even a gym for basketball - and room for more expansion. All of this was known as Hazel Green Park, but in 2002 the park was renamed for Hunter. Hunter had died the year before.

**CAVALRY HILL.** This park is between University Drive and Oakwood Avenue, west of Pulaski Pike. It and the surrounding area are often mistakenly referred to as Calvary Hill - there is a Calvary Street sign two blocks away, and the

## 9. Parks and Recreation Areas

Huntsville map book I have used as a guide lists Cavalry Park in its index, then shows Calvary Park on its map.

The park is a memorial to Buffalo Soldiers who fought in the Battle of San Juan Hill, Cuba, in the Spanish-American War of 1898. The soldiers, part of the U.S. 9th and 10th Cavalry, camped in Huntsville after the war, and some were eventually stationed here.

At one time, there were a lot of Spanish-American War veterans - almost 14,000 - in Huntsville. The U.S. Surgeon-General declared Monte Sano one of the two most healthiest places in the nation (West Point was first), and veterans with yellow fever were sent here to recuperate, while others were sent here to avoid the disease that was sweeping the Gulf Coast. One of the soldiers' lasting efforts was the building of the fountain, the one seen today, at the Big Spring.

**DR. RICHARD SHOWERS, SR., RECREATION CENTER.** The Blue Spring Recreation Center, rebuilt in 1995, has been named for city councilman Dr. Richard Showers, Sr. Showers graduated from Alabama A&M University with B.S. and M.S. degrees, and holds an honorary doctorate. He was first elected to the Huntsville city council in 1988, representing the north district of Huntsville, and has served on numerous planning commissions and boards. The center houses gym facilities and the **Dr. Richard Showers, Sr., Pool.**

**DUBLIN MEMORIAL PARK.** In 1995, Mamie Dublin Smith donated 60 acres to the City of Madison - if they would use it for recreation purposes and if they would name it after two of her family members. Two years later the park opened. It sports a gym, swimming pool, soccer fields, tennis courts, pavilions, and ball fields in a nice landscaped setting off Old Madison Pike. And as Mrs. Smith specified, it is named for Clyde Harris Dublin and Mary Caldwell Dublin.

## 9. Parks and Recreation Areas

**FERN BELL.** This ball field on Whitesburg Drive at Byrd Spring Road is named for Fern Bell, who was president of the Huntsville American (youth baseball) League from 1967 to 1969.

**J.D. AND ANNIE S. HAYS NATURE PRESERVE.** This preserve of over 500 acres was part of about 4,000 acres that Dr. Burritt (see **Burritt Museum**) inherited in the 1800s. Burritt left the land to a trust, and the Hayses bought the land from the trust in 1986. They asked ecologist Susan Weber to develop a plan for the area, and in 1999 Annie Hays donated it to the city. The preserve consists of land virtually untouched for more than a hundred years - teeming with wildlife and displaying spectacular trees. The preserve, entered from U.S. 431 just south of **Hampton Cove**, opened to the public in 2002. There are walkways; a center and more trails are planned.

**JIM WILLIAMS AQUATIC CENTER.** This is a large pool with water temperature maintained at 90 degrees. It is accessible for the disabled. It is used for Red Cross Lifeguarding, CPR, and first aid training, plus water aerobics, aquatic exercise, and swim classes. It is also open to the public for regular swimming.

James A. Williams was a graduate of Marion Military Academy and a sports writer for *The Huntsville Times*. He suffered from Lou Gehrig's disease and used the pool frequently before his death in 1983 at age 39. His sister was Huntsville councilwoman Jane Mabry who was able to have this Monroe Street facility named for him.

**JOHN HUNT PARK.** The park is named for the man who settled at Big Spring in 1805, but it's not the park at the Big Spring. It is the name given to the 400-plus acres that used to be the old airport, on **Airport Road**. The area includes **Joe Davis Stadium** to its north, the municipal golf course south, over a dozen ball fields, and several city buildings, including the **Paul J. Bolden Military Museum**.

## 9. Parks and Recreation Areas

The park also includes a field for flying remote controlled model airplanes, called **Capt. Trey Wilbourn Model Airplane Park**. Wilbourn was a 28-year-old Marine Corps pilot killed in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm when his jet was shot down over Iraq.

**KEN JOHNSTON PARK.** In 1991, Buelah Johnston Huggins gave ten acres near Mountain Gap and Bailey Cove Roads to the city for a park to be named for her husband, Ken Johnston, who had been a prominent Huntsvillian for many years.

**KENT ROBERTSON PARK.** Kent Robertson was active in recreational activities in his neighborhood, playing T-ball and baseball and spending time in the park. When he tragically died in 1988 at the age of nine, neighborhood friends got the city to change the name of Logan Park, on Logan Drive in southwest Huntsville, to Kent Robertson Park.

**MCGUCKEN PARK.** William V. McGucken began working for the Huntsville Parks and Recreation Department in 1974. He became chairman of the American League (youth baseball) board of directors, helped organize the city's youth soccer program, assisted the city in acquiring Sandhurst Park and Bailey Cove Park properties, and laid out the resulting new park. McGucken died in 1983, after which the city named the new park for him.

**SHARON JOHNSTON PARK.** This park halfway between Buckhorn and New Market is named for Sharon Ann Johnston Leithoff. She was a stunt pilot, killed in 1974 when her single-engine biplane crashed during an air show in Massachusetts. In 1976, her family donated over 250 acres of land for the park in her honor. The park includes camping sites, swimming pool, track, ball fields, pond and picnic areas - and a chapel and sculpture, designed by Barry Johnston, Sharon's brother.

## 10. BUILDINGS

There are obviously many buildings in the city and county named and known for their business owners. Here are a few, each of which has an intriguing story behind its name. (There are also lots of buildings - a pretty broad term - in **12. Colleges and Universities**, **13. High Schools**, and **15. More Places of Interest**.)

**BLACKWELL TOWER.** Huntsville Hospital is not named for a person, but the adjoining medical building - the Blackwell Tower - is. A plaque in its lobby states that it is "named for T. Alvin Blackwell, Huntsville Hospital Board of Directors, 1961-1993."

Blackwell was born in the Hurricane Creek community, graduated from Riverton High School, served in the Navy Seabees in World War II, and got his degree in business from the University of Alabama. He went to work for G.W. Jones & Company, but soon started his own real estate business. He has served in - indeed chaired - many civic endeavors, from heart and cancer drives, to being president of the Huntsville Industrial Expansion Committee. In 1961 Blackwell got named to the governing body of Huntsville Hospital, where he served as president for over 25 years. It was under his leadership that the hospital grew to its present capacity that serves north Alabama and south-central Tennessee. He is credited with helping to achieve the hospital's growth over the last quarter century, and some have labeled Blackwell "Mr. Huntsville Hospital."

Whereas the hospital building itself may not be named for a person, some of its many benefactors are recognized by plaques in its corridors. In the **Ada Lee Thurber Rotunda**, which forms the entrance from the hospital's parking garage, the history of the hospital is told. **Mollie Teal**, the city's

## 10. Buildings

well known madam of a house of prostitution, died in 1899 and willed her house to the city for school or hospital use. The city chose hospital, and the Huntsville Infirmary moved to the house in 1904 and stayed until 1926. In 1926, city leaders Carl Grote and Harry Rhett headed a drive for a new hospital. The main hospital wing is “dedicated to **Dr. Carl A. Grote, Sr., and Dr. Carl A. Grote, Jr.,** for their lifelong commitment to patient care, for their leadership and support of the institution, and for their dedicated service to this commitment.” Near the elevators is a picture of “**Harry Moore Rhett, 1873-1948,** [who] donated the land for Huntsville Hospital, 1925.” The bridge that connects the Blackwell Tower to Huntsville Hospital is “in memory of **Dr. William M. McKissack.**”

**C.F. BOST BUILDING.** This building is on Jefferson Street, downtown, across from the parking garage and a couple doors south of the **W.T. Hutchens Building.** At its top is a block inscribed “C.F. Bost, 1921.” Chalmers F. Bost was a contractor and builder in Huntsville from the 1890s to the late 1930s.

**ELBERT H. PARSONS LAW LIBRARY.** One of the most conspicuous names on Courthouse Square isn't really that of a building, but it's that of the Elbert H. Parsons Law Library. The library was moved from the courthouse about 1973, across the street to East Side Courthouse Square where J.C. Penney did business from 1934 to 1965. The building itself was built in 1913 for the May and Cooney Dry Goods Company, which operated until 1931, when it went bankrupt in the Great Depression.

Parsons was born on Hobbs Island in 1908, obtained a law degree from the University of Alabama at age 19, and moved to West Side Square in 1931. In 1933 he was appointed registrar of chancery court, then in 1945 was appointed circuit judge. He had a stern demeanor in court, yet was known as knowledgeable and fair. He was never opposed in his bids for re-election. Judge Parsons died in 1968.

## 10. Buildings

**FLOYD E. "TUT" FANN STATE VETERANS HOME.** Floyd E. "Tut" Fann was a lifelong resident of Madison County. He served in the military during World War II, seeing action at the Battle of the Bulge. Fann spent twenty years on the Alabama Board of Veteran Affairs, and was state commander of the American Legion and a president of the Military Heritage Commission and Hall of Heroes. Locally Fann was instrumental in having the tombstones of Confederate veterans in Maple Hill Cemetery replaced with those now neatly in place, and in seeing that a memorial was erected in Brahan Spring Park for veterans of World War I. He worked hard for many years to have a state veterans home established in Huntsville. Fann died in 1992. The home on Meridian Street that bears his name was opened and dedicated to him in 1995.

**HALSEY GROCERY.** The 1904 Halsey Building on Jefferson Street still contains the Halsey Grocery. Charles Halsey and his brother Leroy started their business nearby in 1879. James Record has written that a John Halsey had a chair-manufacturing business in Huntsville in 1817 a block from this building, and that makes this the oldest continuous business in the city or county. (See **Halsey Avenue.**)

**HARRISON BROTHERS HARDWARE STORE.** This store, on South Side Courthouse Square, is the oldest operating hardware store in the state. Harrison Brothers Hardware began in 1879 in Smithville, Tennessee, by the local brothers' uncles. It was founded in Huntsville in the same year by nephews James and Daniel Harrison as a tobacco store on Jefferson Street. It moved to this location in 1897, expanded next door in 1902, and, over the years, had its stock increased to include crockery, furniture, appliances, and finally hardware. Younger brother Robert, and later his sons Daniel and John, ran the store until 1983, when John, last of the brothers, died. In 1984 the family sold the store to the Historic Huntsville Foundation, which has preserved and operated it since then.

## 10. Buildings

**HOUSING AUTHORITY BUILDINGS.** The Huntsville Housing Authority (HHA), formed in 1941, operates low-cost housing projects at several locations in the city. Most are named for people, e.g., **Councill Court** on Gallatin Street and **Sparkman Homes** off Holmes Avenue. (For stories behind these names, see **Council Boulevard** and **Sparkman High School**.) Here are four more names:

**Johnson Towers.** These high-rise apartments are on Seminole Drive just off Governors Drive. They were opened in 1964 and are named for Herbert Johnson, one of the original HHA commissioners in 1941.

Johnson was born in Water Valley, Mississippi, and came to Huntsville in 1910 as the first director of the then-new YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association). In 1916, he and George Mahoney established the Johnson & Mahoney clothing store, which operated well over 50 years. In 1966, Johnson was named "Huntsville's Outstanding Citizen" by the Chamber of Commerce. He died in 1967, still serving as an HHA commissioner at that time.

**Oscar Mason Community Center.** William Oscar Mason was born in Huntsville in 1901. He was an original 1941 member of HHA and served as chairman from 1955 to 1972. He also served as a member of the Hospital, Public Library, and County Building Authorities. These were responsible for the design and construction of the Madison County Courthouse, Huntsville City Hall, new wing of Huntsville Hospital, and main library. Mason still found time to be on the boards of directors of many civic organizations as well. He died in 1972. The center, and its branch library, that bear his name are on **Mason Court**, off West Holmes Avenue, next to Sparkman Homes. The center was dedicated to him in 1993.

**Searcy Homes.** These single-family dwellings are around the south end of Dallas Avenue just northeast of downtown. They are named for Huntsville Mayor R.B. "Speck" Searcy.

## 10. Buildings

Searcy was born in Huntsville, became mayor just when the Germans were arriving to work at Redstone Arsenal and the city was about to explode in population and needed services. Searcy was mayor from 1952 to 1964, and is credited with changing Huntsville from a cotton town into a space age metropolis. During those dozen years, city size (i.e., land area) doubled to become the second largest in Alabama, and downtown urban renewal was begun - especially in the area from Memorial Parkway to the Big Spring.

A piece of trivia: When Herbert Johnson (see above) became YMCA director, young Searcy was in his first class. The two were good friends. They died on the same day, December 22, 1967.

**Todd Towers.** This high-rise building at the north end of Greene Street downtown is named for Ashford Todd. He was another of the original 1941 commissioners on the HHA, and served until 1968.

Todd was born in Limestone County, and moved to Huntsville in 1921 to join the W.R. Rison Bank, where he worked until it consolidated with the First National Bank in 1948. For a few years he worked as a consultant on Redstone Arsenal, then in 1952 won election as probate judge. He served as judge for 18 years, retiring in 1970. Todd died in 1973.

**I. SCHIFFMAN BUILDING.** On East Side Courthouse Square, this building is best known as the birthplace of actress Tallulah Bankhead. But it was just a store when it was originally put up in 1840. The Romanesque facade was added in 1895. Isaac Schiffman, for whom the building is now named, bought it in 1905 and used it as headquarters for his land holdings and investments. In 1906 he was joined by his son-in-law, Lawrence Goldsmith. (See **Goldsmith-Schiffman Field**.) The Schiffman business continues there today.

## 10. Buildings

**LINCOLN CENTER.** In 1918 William Lincoln Barrell of Lowell, Massachusetts, bought the Abington Mill, vastly expanded it, and renamed it Lincoln Mill. The area around it grew too, to become Lincoln Village. The mill stopped operation in 1957 and burned down in 1980. On Meridian Street, only two buildings remain as reminders: Lincoln Elementary School, built in 1929, still stands. Next to it is a building known as Lincoln Center. The Lincoln Center building is home to a large antique store, a couple businesses, and Renaissance Theatre. The theatre group likes to tell people, especially New Yorkers, that their productions are all at Lincoln Center.

**LOMBARDO BUILDING.** At the corner of Monroe and Jefferson Streets, this building is clearly marked at the top with "Lombardo 1922." In the 1890s, Peter Lombardo established a grocery business in Huntsville that lasted over 40 years. The Lombardo Wholesale Grocery Company operated out of this building, now the site of an antique mall.

**MERRIMACK MALL.** On Triana Boulevard, between Drake and Bob Wallace Avenues, this brick building dates back to when Merrimack Mill was constructed across the street. The main part of the building was built in 1899, like the mill itself, and its wings were added in 1920. Today it is home to antiques and flea market merchandise.

The Merrimack Manufacturing Company of Lowell, Massachusetts, built its mill between 1899 and 1903. Joe J. Bradley, Sr., was its managing agent from 1905 to 1922. Around the mill grew the mill village - Merrimack Village. In 1946, the mill was purchased by Lowenstein Fabrics, which changed its name to Huntsville Manufacturing Company. The village then became known **Huntsville Park**. The mill operated until 1989 - the last mill operating in Huntsville. It was torn down in 1992.

The city has leveled the area where the mill once stood, built ten soccer fields on it, and named it **Merrimack Park**.

## 10. Buildings

### **PAUL BOLDEN MILITARY MUSEUM BUILDING.**

This building just off Airport Road houses The Veterans Memorial Museum, operated by the nonprofit Alabama Center of Military History. There are displays and memorabilia dating back to the Revolutionary War, but the emphasis is on World War I and subsequent conflicts. There are special displays pertaining to North Alabama residents who served in the military. The building is named for one of the county's two World War II Congressional Medal of Honor winners, Staff (later Master) Sergeant Paul L. Bolden. (The other is 1st Lt., later Col., Cecil H. Bolton.)

In Belgium in 1944, Bolden's company was in an assault on a German house used as a strong point, but was pinned down by small arms fire. Bolden and a comrade charged through the fire, and Bolden threw in grenades, then entered the house, surprising 35 Nazi SS troops. With his submachine gun, Bolden killed 20 of them before he was hit - in the shoulder, chest, and stomach. He left the house only to find his comrade killed. He waited outside for the Nazis to surrender. When none came out, he re-entered and shot the remaining 15, thus insuring the success of his company's mission. Bolden's citation reads, "for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of life and beyond the call of duty." He was also a recipient of a Silver Star, four Bronze Stars, two Purple Hearts, and Belgian Croix de Guerre with Palm. He was one of the most decorated soldiers of the war.

Bolden was born at Hobbs Island and grew up on his father's farm near Madison. He enlisted at Huntsville in November 1942 and served until July 1945. After the war, Bolden worked at Redstone Arsenal and lived on a farm near Ardmore, Tennessee. He and his wife Violet raised four sons and three daughters. Bolden died in 1979.

**RUSSEL ERSKINE APARTMENTS.** A best-known Huntsville landmark for over 50 years, the former Russel Erskine Hotel is now an apartment building.

## 10. Buildings

Albert Russel Erskine was born in Huntsville in 1871. He was named for Revolutionary War ancestor, Albert Russel (see **Russel Hill**). He dropped out of school when he was 15, worked as an office boy, moved to St. Louis, soon was chief auditor for American Cotton Company in charge of 300 cotton gins. By 1911 Erskine was vice president of the Underwood Typewriter Company. That same year he joined Studebaker Corporation in South Bend, Indiana, and by 1915 became its president. It was Erskine that moved Studebaker from manufacturing horse drawn carriages to automobiles and international renown.

In 1925 a group of Huntsville businessmen started to build the Wheeler Hotel (to be named for General Joe Wheeler) (see **Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge**), to be the city's 12-story show place. They ran out of money and turned to former resident Erskine, who had become a millionaire. Erskine put up the remaining money on the condition that the hotel bear his name. The hotel opened in 1930. Its Russel Erskine Hotel sign could be seen for miles.

By 1933 the Great Depression had hit America, Studebaker had gone into receivership, and at 63, Erskine was in failing health. That July, Erskine shot himself. The South Bend papers quoted his note: "Nervous System Shattered I Cannot Go On." Erskine was brought back to Huntsville and entombed in the family mausoleum in Maple Hill Cemetery.

**S.H. KRESS BUILDING.** On Washington Street there is an S.H. Kress Building, remains of the five-and-ten-cent store chain. The chain was begun in 1896 in Memphis by Samuel Henry Kress. The store in Huntsville opened in 1905. There was a fire, and the store was rebuilt in 1930. On the front is the S.H. Kress name in stone; the style of the facade is art deco. Kress used an in-house staff of architects that gave his stores a consistent exterior design that other stores lacked. Art experts have noted that the Kress chain "more than any other, was responsible for bringing Art Deco to Main Street."

## 10. Buildings

In 1924 Kress set up a foundation, devoted his life to art collecting, and bought and gave away millions of dollars of art pieces. He became president and trustee of the National Gallery of Art in Washington. Kress died in 1955. The chain of stores went out of business in 1981. The local store at this writing stands empty.

**TERRY-HUTCHENS BUILDING.** This building stands on the northwest corner of Jefferson Street and Clinton Avenue. It was designed by B.F. Hunt of Chattanooga in Gothic Revival style (note the little gargoyles near the top, at present painted green), and built in 1925. At seven stories, it was the city's first sky scraper. It opened as the State National Bank Building. The two families for whom the building is known bought it in the 1940s. A plaque on the building lists I.M. Terry, M.M. Hutchens, W.C. Hutchens, and V.F. Hutchens, with a date of 1944.

The Terrys were merchants whose store was on South Side Courthouse Square from 1897 until well after World War II. It was famous for its signs, "Great Is The Power of Cash" and "T.T. Terry." At one time the store had grocery, piece goods, men's, and ladies' departments. Founder of Terry's Store was Thomas Tyler Terry. Three brothers were also involved, and in 1936 Jim Terry, a nephew, took over. When he died in 1941, his son, Ira M. Terry, became proprietor. Ira is the Terry of the Terry-Hutchens Building.

For information about the Hutchens, see the **W.T. Hutchens Building**, below.

At present, the Terry-Hutchens Building has been converted into business offices, a restaurant, and apartments by City Scapes Corporation, owned by developer Jim Hudson.

**TIMES BUILDING**, at Holmes Avenue and Greene Street, was built in the 1930s by Emory Pierce to house *The Huntsville Daily Times* newspaper. It was the city's second skyscraper, and it is said that Pierce added an additional

## 10. Buildings

story not in the original plans to make sure the Times Building would be the tallest in the city. It isn't named for a person, but seemed worth including here, because it was the tallest building in the city for most of the 20th century.

**W.T. HUTCHENS BUILDING.** This building is on the southwest corner of Jefferson Street and Clinton Avenue. It was built in 1916 and was used by The Hutchens Company for more than 50 years. The W.T. Hutchens name is in stone at the top of the building.

James Madison Hutchens, a carpenter, moved to Huntsville from Tennessee in 1857. He married Lucy Hodges a year later. James served a term on the city council and ran twice, unsuccessfully, for mayor. He and Lucy had six children, one of whom was William Thomas Hutchens, born in 1859. W.T. married Willie Armstrong in 1886, and they had seven children. In 1887 W.T. opened a plumbing and heating business; later it included hardware. He was successful in politics, too, elected to the city council, then for three terms as mayor. W.T. was also U.S. Postmaster in Huntsville appointed by Presidents McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft, and was active in Republican national politics. His seven children included Morton McAllister, Willard Coxe, and Vernon Fisher Hutchens (see their initials at **Terry-Hutchens Building**, above). W.T. Hutchens died in 1940.

**YARBROUGH BUILDING.** This office building at Washington Street and Holmes Avenue opened in 1924 as the Yarbrough Hotel, an 80-room hotel, one of three (the Russel Erskine and Twickenham were the others) that served downtown visitors during the mid-20th-century years when the business of the city was still centrally located. The hotel closed in 1968. An article in the September 27, 1923, *Huntsville Weekly Times* tells that the hotel was almost ready and mentions its new owners, William and Walter Yarbrough. They were owners of Yarbrough Brothers Hardware, which operated a couple blocks away.

## 11. LIBRARIES

The Huntsville-Madison County Public Library consists of the big main building at the corner of Monroe Street and St. Clair Avenue plus several branches. The main building opened in 1986. Branches include ones on Bailey Cove Road and Blue Spring Road; those in Gurley, Harvest, Madison, Monrovia, and Triana; and five that are named for people:

**BESSIE K. RUSSELL BRANCH LIBRARY.** Bessie King's great grandfather was one of the county's earliest settlers and tobacco farmers. However, she was born in Huntsville, in 1895. She graduated from Butler School in 1911 and later obtained a degree at Athens College. At 16, she started teaching - up to twelve grades in a one-room school - and continued to teach for several years. She married Dr. C. H. Russell in 1920. In 1947 she took a part-time job with the Huntsville Public Library, where she worked for over 25 years. Ultimately she directed the library's Heritage Room, which houses the large history and genealogical collections. The branch that bears her name, on Sparkman Drive in northwest Huntsville, was established in 1975, when she was 80.

**ELEANOR MURPHY BRANCH LIBRARY.** Eleanor E. Murphy grew up in Athens, Georgia, graduated from the University of Georgia there, then in 1940 obtained her master's degree in library service from Emory University. She worked for the Atlanta Public Library and Georgia Tech library before getting married in 1944. By 1953, she and her family had moved to Huntsville, and she began working for the city's library. She was head librarian from 1958 to 1960, and became an assistant director in 1961. In 1977 she became the library's director, a position she held until she retired four years later. Over-all, she served in the local

## 11. Libraries

library system for 28 years. The branch that bears her name is on Charlotte Drive in south Huntsville.

**ELIZABETH CARPENTER BRANCH LIBRARY.** In 1992 New Hope's new library, part of a renovated general store built in 1909, was dedicated to Elizabeth Carpenter. She was then 85. Miss Carpenter was born in New Hope, graduated from Huntingdon College in 1928, received a second degree from Peabody College for Teachers in 1931, and during a sabbatical from teaching, got a master's degree from New York University in 1949. Her career began as teacher and librarian at New Hope High School in 1930. She was known as "Miss Library" to hundreds of students and town residents.

**OSCAR MASON BRANCH LIBRARY.** This is part of the **Oscar Mason Community Center** at Sparkman Homes (see **Housing Authority Buildings**).

**TILLMAN HILL BRANCH LIBRARY.** The Tillman Denton Hill Public Library in Hazel Green is dedicated to the former Madison County commissioner. Hill had retired from the commission after 20 years, and had long dreamed of and worked toward a library for the community. Much of the money was raised over several years from private sources through Friends of the Tillman Hill Library, then matched by government funds. Hill, suffering from cancer, was present to cut the ribbon when "his" library opened in 1997.

### 12. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Huntsville is fortunate to be home to two universities, a four-year college, a university extension center, a community college, and a vocational school. Three of these are named for people. Of those that are not but have campuses, there are many named buildings. Because of the limits of this little book, I have had to limit descriptions to only a few facilities - in most cases those which visitors might be most likely to see. All have fascinating stories behind their names.

Please excuse some editorializing on my part, but most students, let alone visitors, know nothing about the people for whom their school or buildings are named. It would be a valuable exercise if some enterprising English or history professor at each school would create a student project to research each name, write a brief biography of the person, tell how and why the road or building (or whatever) got so named, and publish a sheet or even little pamphlet of the information. Both students and visitors would likely welcome the information and benefit from the knowledge.

**AT ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY.** The school was founded in 1875 as Huntsville Normal School. Part of the original campus is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Councill Boulevard.** William Hooper Councill (sometimes spelled with one "l") was born a slave in North Carolina in 1848 and was brought to Huntsville by owner Judge D.C. Humphrey. The self-educated Councill was active in the labor movement of the 1870s, a minister and founder of St. John's African Methodist Episcopal Church in Huntsville, editor (1877-1884) of the *Huntsville Herald*, and a successful lawyer (admitted to the bar in 1883).

## 12. Colleges and Universities

But Councill is best known as the founder of Alabama A&M University. Councill served as its principal from 1875 to 1890 when it was known as the Huntsville Normal School, and as its president from 1890 to 1909 when it was known as the State Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes and moved to its present location. Councill died in 1909.

If you enter the campus' main entrance from Chase Road, you will drive up Councill Boulevard. In downtown Huntsville, on St. Clair Avenue, next to the main library, is the old Councill High School, which operated from 1892 to 1966 and is now site of the **Councill Boys & Girls Club**. East of that are several blocks of low-cost housing operated by the Huntsville Housing Authority and known as **Councill Court**.

**Louis Crews Physical Education Complex.** The biggest and newest football field in the area is named for Alabama A&M's successful football coach, Louis Crews.

Crews was born in Bessemer in 1917, played football and basketball there at Dunbar High School. He came to Alabama A&M and lettered three times in basketball and three in football. He spent four years in the Army during World War II - and played football. Crews then went to Ohio State University for his B.S. degree, later earning an M.S. from Alcorn State University and a P.E. Directorship from Indiana University. He spent seven years at Alcorn, as backfield coach, baseball coach, and head women's basketball coach.

In 1960, Crews was invited back to Alabama A&M as head football coach. In his first year, his record was 7-1. In 1963, his team went undefeated, and remained undefeated in conference play for four years. He took his teams to the Magic City Classic sixteen times and won it ten - once seven times in a row. He coached Bulldog teams to several conference championships, produced several players who went on to become professional players (John Stallworth is

## 12. Colleges and Universities

perhaps best known), and won numerous awards including being named "Outstanding Citizen of Huntsville." During his coaching career Crews compiled a record of 110-61-3.

**Wilson Building.** In 1911 Virginia McCormick, inventor Cyrus McCormick's daughter, who lived at Kildare in Huntsville, gave a huge donation to what is now Alabama A&M for building a domestic science building and a hospital. In the 1990s, what had been the Virginia McCormick Home Economics Building was renovated and renamed the James Hembrey Wilson Building. It is now home of the Alabama State Black Archives Research Center and Museum and is open to the public.

James Hembrey Wilson was born in Kentucky in 1880. He went through high school in Cincinnati, then graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. He excelled in music, was considered a master of the cornet, and was a fixture in traveling variety shows. In 1908 he succeeded W. C. Handy as Alabama A&M bandmaster and instructor of vocal music. He eventually held several staff positions culminating as the first black to be named treasurer of Alabama A&M. Wilson retired in 1951 after 43 consecutive years of service.

**AT OAKWOOD COLLEGE.** Oakwood is a full four-year liberal arts college, founded in 1896 by the General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists.

**Dred Scott Home Site.** There's nothing to see yet, but it's planned to mark the site with a historical marker soon. I've included the story here, because most people don't know that Dred Scott once lived in Huntsville on what is now the Oakwood campus.

Dred Scott was born in Virginia about 1799, a slave of the Peter Blow family. He was originally named Sam, but on death of a brother, took his brother's name, Dred. In 1819, Blow bought a quarter section of land where Oakwood College now stands and moved to Huntsville - slaves too - to

## 12. Colleges and Universities

begin a cotton plantation. When the College opened in 1896, its first students were housed in existing log cabins, ones old enough to have been built by Scott and his fellow slaves.

The plantation failed, and in 1821, Blow moved to Florence where he opened the Peter Blow Inn, and later the Jefferson Hotel. In 1830 Blow moved to St. Louis and sold Scott to Dr. John Emerson, a military surgeon. Emerson used Scott as a valet, and as Emerson went on assignment to Illinois and Wisconsin, Scott went along - although slavery was prohibited in those states by the Missouri Compromise. In 1846 Scott filed suit in Missouri for his freedom, having lived so long in those free states. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where in 1857 in the infamous Dred Scott Decision, the court held that a Negro was not a citizen, a slave was property, and the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional. The decision was one of the events that lead to the Civil War.

In 1857, Mrs. Emerson (Dr. Emerson had died) returned Dred Scott to the Blow family, where he was given his freedom. Scott died of tuberculosis the next year.

**Eva B. Dykes Library, Archives, and Museum.** Eva Beatrice Dykes, a model of academic excellence, was born in Washington, D.C., in 1893. She graduated from Howard University there, taught English for a year at Walden University in Nashville, then entered Radcliffe College for further study. Radcliffe did not accept Dykes' degree from Howard, so she started over, gaining a B.A. (*magna cum laude*) in 1917 and an M.A. a year later. In 1920, she joined the Seventh Day Adventist Church. In 1921, she got her Ph.D., one of three black women that year who were the first ever to receive the degree.

Dykes taught for nine years at what is now Dunbar High School in Washington, then joined the Howard faculty for fifteen more. She edited one book, authored another, and wrote many articles; in 1934 for *Message Magazine*, she

## 12. Colleges and Universities

began a column, and continued it for 50 years. In 1944 she was invited to Oakwood to head the English Department. She was the first faculty member with a Ph.D. She also directed the choir and chorus. She retired in 1968 but was called back in 1970 for another five years - for a total of over 50 years of teaching. In 1978 the new library, archives, and museum building was opened and named for her. Dykes died in 1986 at age 93.

### **AT UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA - HUNTSVILLE.**

The road that winds through the north part of the campus is **Ben Graves Drive**, named for the first president of UAH who took office in 1970. The road through the south part of the campus is **John Wright Drive**, named for UAH's second president, who succeeded Graves in 1976.

**Bevill Center.** The Bevill Center's full name is the Tom Bevill Center for Professional Development and Continuing Education. It serves as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Short Course Training Center and as UAH's Division of Continuing Education. It also operates as a hotel, restaurant, and conference center. It is on Sparkman Drive near University Drive.

The Bevill Center is named for U.S. Congressman Tom Bevill, who was chairman of the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee of the House Public Works Committee and largely responsible for obtaining the federal funds needed for the building. Bevill was born in Townley, Alabama, in 1921, obtained his B.S. and LL.B. degrees from the University of Alabama, practiced law in Jasper for 18 years, and was elected to Congress in 1966, where he served for 30 years, retiring in 1998.

**Roberts Hall.** In 1988, the Humanities Building - not necessarily a building visitors come to immediately - was named for Dr. Frances Cabaniss Roberts. I chose it for this book because of Dr. Roberts' impact on the hundreds of people who have researched and studied local history.

## 12. Colleges and Universities

Roberts was born in Gainsville, Alabama, in 1916. At 15 she went to nearby Livingston College, and by 17 she had a certificate and her first teaching job. She used to visit her aunt, Fannie Cabaniss, in Huntsville, and when the aunt died in 1937, Roberts moved to Huntsville to the Cabaniss family home on Randolph Street. She began teaching in Huntsville at West Clinton School. In 1942 she started teaching history at Huntsville High School, which she did for ten years.

Roberts also began efforts to help establish a university extension center (eventually UAH), and served on the committees for its creation, to find the site, and for the first building. She is considered one of the founders of UAH. Roberts then began teaching at UAH in 1950 and taught 25 different courses in history over 30 years, before retiring in 1980. Dr. Roberts died in 2000.

**CALHOUN COMMUNITY COLLEGE** was founded in Decatur in 1947. It now also holds classes in a facility in Cummings Research Park. It is not named for the local Calhoun family as one might suspect, but instead for John C. Calhoun of South Carolina - brilliant orator, states rights advocate, and constitutional lawyer who might have become president if he had not been so uncompromising.

John Caldwell Calhoun was born in South Carolina in 1782. He graduated from Yale University, studied law in Connecticut, returned to South Carolina to practice, and quickly entered politics. In 1810 he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where along with Henry Clay, he was a "war hawk," leading to the War of 1812 with England. In 1817 President Monroe made Calhoun his Secretary of War. He was Vice President under Presidents Adams and Jackson, but after quarrels with the latter, he resigned. Calhoun was then elected to the Senate. President Tyler next appointed him Secretary of State, but Calhoun was re-elected to the Senate, where he served until his death in 1850.

## 12. Colleges and Universities

**FAULKNER UNIVERSITY.** Faulkner University is named for Alabama philanthropist Jimmy Faulkner.

James Herman Faulkner was born in Lamar County in 1916. He wanted to be a journalist, so he went to the University of Missouri, where he graduated in 1936. He started his newspaper career in southern Alabama the same year by going into debt and buying the *Baldwin Times*. Ever since, Faulkner claims he has been in debt - at the same time giving away millions of dollars to good causes.

In 1940, Faulkner became mayor of Bay Minette, then in World War II joined the Army Air Corps and became a pilot and flight instructor. After the war, politics beckoned, and Faulkner became state senator and chairman of the Education Committee, where he was the strongest advocate of Alabama's community college system. Faulkner ran for Governor in 1954 and 1958 - unsuccessfully. He joined Volkert & Associates and has devoted much of the remainder of his life in business affairs - so successfully that he was named "Person of the Century" by Bay Minette and Baldwin County.

In 1942 the Montgomery Bible School was established. In 1953 the first bachelor degrees were conferred in Bible, and the name was changed to the Alabama Christian College. Early on, Faulkner had joined and was active in growing his local Church of Christ, and in 1958, he was asked to join the College's board of directors. During the 1970s, the Montgomery campus expanded, and four centers were created elsewhere, including the one in Huntsville that is on Wynn Drive. In 1983, the College name was changed in his honor to Faulkner University.

**J. F. DRAKE STATE TECHNICAL SCHOOL.** In 1947 a legislative act created the Huntsville Vocational School. Land for the school, on Meridian Street, was given by Alabama A&M University. It took until 1962 for facilities to be built and the first students to attend. The school was one

## **12. Colleges and Universities**

of 27 vocational-technical schools created under the “Breakthrough in Education” program of Governor George Wallace. In 1966 the name was changed to honor Dr. Joseph Fanning Drake.

Drake was born in Auburn in 1892. He obtained his B.A. degree from Talladega College and his M.A. from Columbia University. In 1920 he was appointed supervisor of adult education for the Alabama Department of Education. After five years he took over as dean of what is now Alabama State University in Montgomery. In 1927 he became president of Alabama A&M University, a position he held for 35 years until his death in 1962. If you drive further out Meridian Street and turn right to enter the Alabama A&M campus, the first big building you’ll encounter will be the new Joseph F. Drake Memorial Learning Resources Center.

## 13. HIGH SCHOOLS

One of the popular ways of commemorating someone is to name a school building for the person. Of the several high schools in the city and county, six are named for persons, and they are included here.

But including all Huntsville and county schools named for people exceeded the scope of this little book. It would be a wonderful project for a school or student to research and document middle (M) and elementary (E) school names: Chaffee (E), Davis Hills (M), Edward White (M), Lynn Fanning (E), Martin Luther King (E), Morris (E), Stone (M), Terry Heights (E), and Williams (M, E). If such a project is ever done, be sure the results are placed in the Heritage Room of the Huntsville-Madison County Library.

**ANNIE C. MERTS CENTER.** Annie C. Merts was born in Huntsville in 1881. She taught two years in Madison County (at Green Grove, then Keg's Mill) and 49 years in Huntsville (1923 to 1952). She served as the first president of the Huntsville Teachers Association, and became assistant principal of Huntsville High School. Merts died in 1955.

The former Huntsville High School building on Randolph Street (across from her home) has been converted for board of education and related Huntsville school offices and has been named in her honor. Her office in the building is preserved and contains some of her memorabilia.

**BOB JONES HIGH SCHOOL.** Located in Madison, the school is named for Robert E. "Bob" Jones of Scottsboro, who served 30 years (1947-77) in the U.S. Congress from the district that includes Madison County. The school was established in 1974, and the most recent \$15 million facility was built in 1995.

### 13. High Schools

**S.R. BUTLER HIGH SCHOOL.** Samuel R. Butler was born in Poplar Ridge, Alabama, in 1868. He graduated from Winchester Normal College in 1890. He moved to Huntsville to teach and spent 40 years in local schools, as superintendent of public schools (1893-1906), principal of the private State School of Huntsville (1906-08), principal and owner of his own Butler School (1908-14), and county superintendent of public education (1905-31).

West Huntsville High School on West Clinton Street had been built by the WPA (Public Works Administration) and given to the city in 1944. In 1951, several schools were consolidated into West Huntsville, and the name was changed to S.R. Butler High School. Because of the growth of the city by the 1960s, a new expanded site and building was sought, and the present S.R. Butler High School on West Holmes Street was opened in 1967.

**GRISSOM HIGH SCHOOL.** Virgil Ivan Grissom was born in Indiana in 1926. He graduated from Purdue University in 1950, then served in combat with the Air Force over Korea and as a test pilot, when he was chosen in 1959 in the first group of seven astronauts. "Gus" Grissom piloted Mercury-Redstone 4, the second Mercury suborbital flight, in 1961. He was command pilot for Gemini 3, the first test of the two-man spacecraft (John Young was the other astronaut). He had been selected to be commander of the first Apollo flight in 1967, when during a launch simulation on the pad at Cape Kennedy, a fire broke out in the spacecraft cabin. Grissom, Edward White, and Roger Chaffee were killed before anyone could get the complex hatch open.

Three new Huntsville schools were dedicated to the astronauts in December 1967. They were Grissom High School, Edward H. White Junior High School, and Roger B. Chaffee Elementary School. Astronaut Russell L. Schweickart, a member of the Apollo 9 crew, came to Huntsville for the dedication and represented all astronauts.

### 13. High Schools

**J.O. JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL.** J. Oliver “Pick” Johnson grew up in Monrovia. He got his lifelong nickname as a boy for eating a giant pickle on his walk to school. He attended Athens College, then in 1930 was ordained a Baptist minister. He entered the education field in 1938 as basketball coach at West Huntsville School. And he married the pretty young English teacher.

Johnson also had a career in the military, spanning over 30 years. He served in Africa, Sicily, Italy, and France with combat engineers during World War II and later in Korea. He was a brigadier general in 1967 when he left the service.

At the time of his death in 1969, Johnson was general manager of G.W. Jones & Sons and president of the Jones Valley Development Company. Johnson had a lifelong interest in, and was a recognized leader for defense matters, church, engineering, community affairs, and education.

The year Johnson retired from the military he was named to the board of education. He coordinated efforts to secure the land on which the school that now bears his name stands. The school dedicated its main building in 1972. It now consists of several buildings on a 48-acre campus.

**LEE HIGH SCHOOL.** Lee High School is “indirectly” named for Robert E. Lee. It reportedly took its name from U.S. 72, “Lee Highway,” which originally ran a couple blocks from the school.

Robert E. Lee was born in Virginia. His father was Revolutionary War hero Henry “Light Horse Harry” Lee and friend of George Washington. Robert graduated from West Point. He married Mary Ann Randolph Custis, great granddaughter of Martha Washington by her first marriage, and for many years lived in Arlington in the Custis mansion, now part of Arlington Cemetery. Lee was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers and held a variety of assignments, including one during the Mexican War with Winfield Scott’s

### 13. High Schools

force that fought to Mexico City. From 1852 to 1855, Lee was superintendent of West Point. At the start of the Civil War, Lee refused command of Federal forces, instead was loyal to his state and offered his services to the Confederacy. He became its brilliant commander, one of the most famous and respected soldiers in American history, and a symbol of the South. After the war, Lee became president of Washington College, now Washington-Lee University, and devoted himself to education.

**SPARKMAN HIGH SCHOOL.** Sparkman High School, as well as the community around it, is named for Senator John Jackson Sparkman. Sparkman was born in Hartselle in 1899. He was educated at the University of Alabama, then practiced law in Huntsville until 1936 when he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served five terms. There during World War II, he was on the Military Affairs Committee, and helpful to the growth of Redstone Arsenal.

In 1946 when Sparkman had been nominated for a sixth term, long-time Senator John Bankhead, Jr., died, and Sparkman decided to seek that vacant seat. In the general election, his name appeared as the Democratic candidate for both the House and Senate seats. He is probably the only American political figure to be elected to both the House and Senate at the same time and on the same ballot.

In 1952, Sparkman was selected to run for vice president on the unsuccessful Democratic ticket with Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson. Sparkman served in Congress for over 40 years, until 1979. He died in 1985.

**Sparkman Drive**, one of Huntsville's major streets; the **John J. Sparkman Center** on Redstone Arsenal (pictured on page 65); and **Sparkman Homes**, operated by the Huntsville Housing Authority off of Holmes Avenue, are among local sites that also honor the senator.

## 14. AT REDSTONE ARSENAL (RSA)

In 1941 the U.S. Army was authorized to construct a chemical manufacturing and storage facility to augment the one the Chemical Warfare Service (CWS) had at Edgewater, Maryland. An area of over 7,700 acres southwest of Huntsville was selected, and named **Huntsville Arsenal**. About the same time, the Army's Ordnance Department needed new facilities for ammunition production. Recognizing the economy of locating next to the new CWS installation, the Chief of Ordnance acquired 4,000 adjacent acres. As infrastructure for the Arsenal was created, many of the names of its roads and buildings stem from this era.

Colonel Carroll D. Hudson and Major H. Sachs made several trips to Huntsville that year, and one of Major Sachs' assignments was to recommend names for Ordnance plants. According to Hudson, he, Hudson, wanted the name Redstone because of the red rock and soil in northern Alabama. Major Sachs agreed. And, as Colonel Hudson has written, "no one else objected" so the name Redstone became official.

After World War II the Chemical Warfare Service, by then the Chemical Corps, declared Huntsville Arsenal surplus to its needs. Again, about the same time, the Ordnance Corps needed more space for its new rocketry and missile activities. In 1949, Ordnance took over the Huntsville Arsenal area, facilities, operation of all of Redstone Arsenal.

In 1960 another big change occurred when nonmilitary space-oriented missions were reorganized under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and such activities at the Arsenal were transferred from the Army Ballistic Missile Agency to the new **Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC)**.

#### **14. At Redstone Arsenal**

**ARMY AIRFORCE MEMORIALS.** In the 1940s an airstrip was built to accommodate planes used to test various chemical bombs and grenades. A simulated wooden village was built as one of the targets. Over the years, planes dropped more than eight million pounds of chemical munitions onto Huntsville Arsenal.

On June 27, 1944, a fully loaded B-26 Martin Marauder took off but developed engine trouble. The plane caught fire and crashed in a cotton field just north of U.S. 72 and about nine miles from Huntsville. The bombs exploded.

**Hale Road**, which connects the airstrip with Rideout Road, is named for 1st Lieutenant Emmett J. Hale, the pilot. He had been among the first group of Army Airforce officers stationed at Redstone in 1943.

**Loeffler Park** is named for 2nd Lieutenant Jerome Loeffler, the bombardier.

**Valim Reservoir**, the Arsenal's water reservoir on Madkin Mountain, is named for Sergeant Antone Valim, the flight engineer.

**BUILDINGS.** When Huntsville Arsenal was first created, over 500 families had to move. More than 500 buildings, three schools, and 14 churches were lost, some among the oldest structures in Madison County. Covered below are what is perhaps the building most visited by people who are not Arsenal workers, the only two of the many original structures that survive, and in contrast, the newest of the Arsenal's named buildings.

**Fox Hospital.** Except for the commissary, perhaps the building most visited by retired military is the hospital. The Fox Army Hospital officially opened in 1978. It was named for Brigadier General Leon Alexander Fox (1891-1965), a Birmingham native whose career as an Army doctor spanned more than 30 years. He served in two world wars and

## 14. At Redstone Arsenal

earned 16 medals and decorations, including awards from the British and Italian governments.

**Goddard House.** Originally this was Chaney house, built about 1835. In 1955 it was moved, much of it was rebuilt, and for a long time it was used as military quarters. It was renamed Goddard House in honor of the man considered the father of American rocketry. For a while it was used as military quarters for VIPs, but for the past decade or more, it has been used for administrative purposes.

Robert Hutchings Goddard received Master's and Doctor's degrees at Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, where he later taught. He researched and improved solid-propellant rockets, but his most noted accomplishment was in 1926 when he fired the world's first successful liquid-propellant rocket. It mixed gasoline and oxygen, and went only 184 feet, but proved that the principle was valid. With grant money, Goddard moved his work to Roswell, New Mexico, but during World War II, the government was unconvinced that rockets were suitable weapons. They limited Goddard's efforts to work on rocket-assisted-takeoff units for airplanes. When Goddard died in 1945, he held more than 200 patents covering "basic inventions in the field of rockets, guided missiles and space exploration."

**Harris Home.** This home of the Harris family still stands on Buxton Road. It was built by Sam Harris, Sr., in the 1920s, reportedly around an existing log cabin from the early 1800s. From the 1800s, the Harris family owned and farmed 1,000 acres here that stretched south to the Tennessee River, and they lived in the home until the Army bought it in 1941. At that time Sam Harris, Jr., bought the Bob Wade property north of Huntsville (see **Bob Wade Lane**). The Harris home was used as a military residence for over 50 years, but it now stands empty and in need of maintenance if not restoration.

#### **14. At Redstone Arsenal**

**John J. Sparkman Center, Heflin Buildings, and Bob Jones Auditorium.** The Sparkman Center is the largest recent big building project on Redstone Arsenal. The Center is a campus-style complex of buildings that provides facilities for over 3,000 people. It is headquarters for the U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command. The first six buildings opened in 1994, and the complex was dedicated to Senator Sparkman. (See **Sparkman High School.**)

In 1998 two more buildings were added and called the Heflin Buildings for Alabama Senator Howell Heflin. Heflin graduated from Birmingham-Southern College and the University of Alabama Law School. He was elected as chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, then in 1978 to the U.S. Senate. He retired in 1997. Heflin was a supporter of Huntsville and Redstone Arsenal endeavors, especially area missile research and development and construction of I-565.

The new auditorium at the Sparkman Center has been named for former Congressman Bob Jones. (See **Bob Jones High School.**)

**Shelby Center.** The new Missile & Space Intelligence Center has been named for Senator Richard C. Shelby. Shelby is a fourth-generation Alabamian and graduate of the University of Alabama. He served eight years in the Alabama Legislature, then four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, before being elected to the U.S. Senate in 1987. For eight years he has been on the Senate Select Intelligence Committee as well as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and was largely responsible for authorizing and obtaining funds for the building.

**BUROSE ROAD.** Missile Command Headquarters are on this road. It once connected the NASA and Army sectors. It was named for Walter Burose, a popular German scientist in the Structures & Mechanical Laboratory of the Army Ballistic Missile Command (ABMA) who died in 1956 of a heart attack while out selling brooms for the Lions Club.

#### 14. At Redstone Arsenal

**HUNTSVILLE ARSENAL CWS ROADS.** In 1941 the laying of new roads was one of the first construction projects in preparing the Arsenal. The Chemical Warfare Service memorialized some of its World War I fallen soldiers by naming roads after them. The following were all members of the First Gas Regiment and were killed in France in 1918:

**Buxton Road** is the extension of Green Cove Road through Gate 2 at the southern part of the Arsenal. It is named for Corporal Vernon C. Buxton, killed in action in the Verdun Sector.

**Goss Road** is the extension of Drake Avenue, through Gate 8, west to Rideout Road. It is named for 1st Lieutenant Paul L. Goss, who died of wounds.

**Martin Road** crosses the entire Arsenal, from Whitesburg Drive west through Gate 1, then through Gate 7 to Wall Triana Road. It is named for Private Herbert B. Martin, killed in action at St. Thibaut.

**Neal Road** connects Patton and Rideout Roads in the center of the Arsenal. It is named for Private William K. Neal, killed in action at Cite St. Pierre.

**Patton Road** extends north through the main portion of the Arsenal, through Gate 10, until it becomes Jordan Lane. It is named for Sergeant Gerald S. Patton, who died of wounds. (But there's a different story in 8. **More Huntsville Streets: Patton Road.**)

**Rideout Road** also extends north through the main portion of the Arsenal, through Gate 9, through Cummings Research Park, and well north of Huntsville until it joins Ardmore Highway. It is named for 1st Lieutenant Percy E. Rideout, killed in action at Verdun. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

#### **14. At Redstone Arsenal**

**MARSHALL SPACE FLIGHT CENTER.** The Center that honors Marshall's name was activated in 1960 with the transfer of property and personnel from the Ordnance Corps' Ballistic Missile Agency. Dr. Wernher von Braun became its director.

In 1961 MSFC's Mercury-Redstone boosted Alan B. Shepard, America's first astronaut, into space. In the 1960s, MSFC developed the Saturn series of rockets that served the Apollo program and eventually lifted man to the moon, then placed Skylab into orbit. MSFC has also managed, for examples, the High-Energy Astronomy Observatory series that included the Hubble Space Telescope, the Space Shuttle propulsion systems, and Spacelab.

MSFC is named for General George C. Marshall. Marshall was a graduate of Virginia Military Institute, directed the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives in World War I, served as aide to General Pershing, and became Army Chief of Staff in 1939, a position he held throughout World War II. In 1947, President Truman named him Secretary of State. Part of the Truman Doctrine was the Marshall Plan, for reconstruction of Europe, for which Marshall received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. In 1950, during the Korean War, he was made Secretary of Defense, and became the only person ever to serve as both Secretary of State (1947-49) and of Defense (1950-51). This widely admired officer and diplomat died in 1959.

**ORDNANCE ROADS.** At least a dozen Redstone Arsenal roads, all called drives, are named for chiefs of Ordnance. They are all short roads off Goss Road in the main post area near the officer and NCO family housing areas. They include:

**Roberts Drive.** The drive is a misspelling. It is supposed to be named for Brigadier General Samuel McRoberts, Ordnance officer with the AEF in World War I and then chief of the New York Ordnance District from 1932 to 1941.

## 14. At Redstone Arsenal

**Vincent Drive** is named for Brigadier General Thomas K. Vincent, the first commanding general at Redstone Arsenal, June 1952.

**TOFTOY THRUWAY.** At the end of World War II, Col. Holger N. Toftoy was chief of the technical intelligence team for the Army Ordnance Corps. It was to his organization that the German scientists from Peenemunde, the German rocket base, surrendered. In 1945 Toftoy personally flew to Washington to get permission to bring the scientists to the United States, eventually to Huntsville. He was assigned to Washington and given responsibility for the direction of the Army missile program.

In 1952 Toftoy was assigned to Redstone Arsenal, as Director of the Ordnance Missile Laboratories, then was promoted to major general and in 1954 became Commander of Redstone Arsenal. Products created during his command are now historic: Nike Ajax, Nike Hercules, Hawk, LaCrosse, Honest John, Corporal, Redstone, Sergeant, Pershing, Jupiter, Jupiter C, Explorer, and Pioneer.

In 1958, Toftoy was named Commanding General, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. He retired in 1960, died in 1967. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

**ZIERDT ROAD.** Colonel John G. Zierdt was born in 1913, graduated from West Point, and served during World War II in Panama and Europe. From 1956 to 1962, Zierdt had six assignments at Redstone Arsenal, and in 1963 became Commanding General of the Army's Missile Command (MICOM). He served in that capacity until 1967. Zierdt's awards were many and included the Bronze Star. He died in 2000.

## 15. More Places of Interest

### 15. MORE PLACES OF INTEREST

**BECKY PEIRCE MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE.** In 2001, Huntsville's municipal golf course got a new name, the Becky Peirce Municipal Gold Course. Elizabeth C. Peirce, known as "Ms. Becky," started play in 1940. She held the women's championship for twelve years. She served as a member of the Golf Advisory Committee for 36 years and was a major force in enabling the course to grow from a poor nine holes to a professionally rated 18-hole course.

**BENTON H. WILCOXON ICE COMPLEX.** Benton Hartung Wilcoxon was a native of California, but he and his wife were residents of Huntsville for 50 years. He helped develop Randolph School and served on its board of directors. More importantly, Wilcoxon was an avid skier, liked winter sports, and was the major figure in bringing ice sports to this part of the South. He opened The Ice Palace on Governor's Drive in 1958, giving the city its first ice skating rink. He was a founder of the Ice Skating Institute (ISI) of America, and in 1995, he was named to its Hall of Fame. He was involved in the original proposal for the building that now bears his name. Wilcoxon died in 1997.

**BRAHAN SPRING.** By 1811, land in Madison County was so popular that the federal land office was moved from Nashville to Huntsville. Prices rose from the original \$2 per acre to hundreds, even thousands of dollars per acre. In 1818 there was another great land sale. John Coffee, the surveyor general of the local land office, joined with Andrew Jackson and other Nashvilleans to bid on and buy up the choicest land. But they met stiff opposition, much from John Brahan, the receiver of public money at Huntsville. Brahan was able to buy over 40,000 acres. Unfortunately, he did this with government money, and when public funds were

## 15. More Places of Interest

needed, he came up thousands of dollars short. He was investigated by a congressional committee but pleaded he did it to save local land from wealthy speculators, and was convincing enough that he was not prosecuted. It is some of that land, and spring and lake, that now bear his name.

Sometimes, as in Edward Betts' book, the name is spelled both Brahan and Braham. Such references are all to the same person, and the correct spelling is Brahan.

**BURRITT MUSEUM.** William Henry Burritt was born in Huntsville in 1869. His father, Dr. Amatus Robbins Burritt, who had a practice in Huntsville for over twenty years, was a pioneer of homeopathic medicine. Son William graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1890, did post graduate work in Cincinnati and New York, returned to Huntsville in 1898, and listed himself as a homeopathic physician.

In 1892 he had married Pearl Johnson, but Pearl had died in 1898 of appendicitis. In 1899 he married Mrs. Josephine Drummond, a wealthy widow from St. Louis. The couple moved there, where Burritt became involved with rubber manufacturing, eventually obtaining patents for improvements to tires. In 1933, Josephine died, and Burritt inherited the bulk of her estate.

Burritt returned to Huntsville, purchased land called "Roundtop" on Monte Sano Mountain, and constructed a unique home. It was insulated with bales of wheat straw - and in 1939, it burned. In the rebuilding, straw was again used, but inside one-inch-thick plaster, and with asbestos siding on the outside. It was odd, but temperature stays between 55 and 80 degrees, and acoustics are excellent.

In 1949 Burritt donated his father's home on Eustis Street to the city for a health center. The house is now gone, but the Madison County Health Department offices are located on the site. In 1955, Burritt died and left the Monte Sano home and property to the city, to be maintained as a museum.

## 15. More Places of Interest

**CLAY BRIDGE.** The bridge that carries U.S. 231 (Memorial Parkway) across the Tennessee River is named the Clay Bridge. It is named for planter, lawyer, and politician Clement Comer Clay. Locals once knew it as the Spragins Bridge, for Robert E. Spragins (see **Spragins Street**), who was instrumental in getting it built, but state law prohibited it from being named for someone still alive, so the honor went to Clay.

Clay was born in Virginia, graduated from then-new University of Tennessee, and in 1811 at age 22 set up a law practice in Huntsville. He soon became owner of a large plantation, "Oakley." In 1818, he was chosen one of Madison County's representatives to the first session of the Alabama Territorial Legislature, and in 1819 one of the delegates to the first constitutional convention in Huntsville. When the court system was set up, Clay was one of the first justices. In 1828 he served in the state legislature and became Speaker of the House. A year later he was elected to Congress and served three terms. In 1835, and through the Creek Indian wars and financial panic of 1837, he was Governor. In 1843 he returned to the state supreme court, then to his law practice, which he shared with his three sons. (One son, Clement Clairborne Clay, was to follow his father into politics, first as state legislator and later (1853) as U.S. Senator.) When Union forces occupied Huntsville during the Civil War, Clay was arrested. Clay died soon after the war, in 1866.

**CUMMINGS RESEARCH PARK.** Milton Kyser Cummings was born in Gadsden, Alabama. As a boy he suffered osteomyelitis and had one leg amputated just below the knee. Much of his life was spent showing others how to be successful despite a handicap.

A Huntsville cotton merchant befriended Cummings, gave him money to go into business. Cummings became the most successful cotton merchant in the city, then got out of the business and invested heavily in the stock market - again

## 15. More Places of Interest

successfully. In 1958 he took over presidency of faltering Brown Engineering Company and, with much of his own money, built it into the largest machine shop in the South serving the space program. In 1960, for new buildings, he bought 150 acres - 80 for Brown, the remainder to be sold to other companies at cost. The location would become the initial part of the park that now bears his name.

In addition to his role at Brown, Cummings was involved in numerous local and national campaigns involving health, education, and employment. He was once state senator, served on the school board, and in 1965 was named Huntsville's "Man of the Year."

A research institute and park were ideas of Dr. Wernher von Braun. He believed an industrial park should be developed for companies that would serve R&D requirements of the **Marshall Space Flight Center** and the Army Missile Command. The city responded by zoning 2,000 acres for that purpose.

It was just after Cummings' death at age 61 in 1972 that the park was named Huntsville's Cummings Research Park.

A street within the park has been named **Moquin Drive** for Brown vice-president Joe Moquin. Although Cummings bought the original 150 acres, it was Moquin in 1960 who was assigned the task of finding the place. He went on to become CEO of Teledyne Brown Engineering and in the 1980s to convince the city council to expand the park even further with what is called Research Park West.

By the way, the original Brown Engineering Company was named for area industrialist **Rufus P. Brown**.

**DOWNTOWN RESCUE MISSION.** The Downtown Rescue Mission (DRM) began to serve the homeless in 1975. Today it not only offers temporary housing and meals, but a Christian program for those who want to break

## 15. More Places of Interest

their homeless lifestyle, training and education, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation for those struggling with substance abuse problems.

DRM moved to its present location on 9th Street in 1978. In 1981 a chapel was built next to a notorious night club. The unhappy owner said he'd never sell his place to the mission, but he was wrong, because today his ex-bar serves as the mission's central office. The large Walker Building that serves as a dining room (it serves 500 meals a day) and men's dormitory for up to 170 men was built in 1985, and the Sapp Shelter for Women and Children, which can handle 100, opened in 2001. Their stories follow.

If you paid for this book, you probably don't need DRM services. On the other hand, DRM, and other missions too, can use whatever help you can give.

**Miss Eloise Walker Building.** Eloise Walker was a teacher in Huntsville for over 40 years, and taught at West Huntsville Elementary School, which is just a few doors down the street. She was a frequent donor to the mission. In her honor, her brother, Toky Walker, made the large donation that made the building possible.

**Sapp Shelter for Women and Children.** The Sapp family came to Huntsville in 1962. Gene took a job with Space Craft Inc. (SCI), rose to become its chairman, formulated its recent merger with Sanmina Corporation (it is now Sanmina-SCI), and after 40 years, retired in 2002. His wife Pat worked too, as a volunteer at a nursing home and for numerous charities. She especially served on the DRM advisory board, and the Sapps gave a "lead gift" of \$220,000 toward a women's shelter. That was plenty, but DRM's board persuaded the Sapps that their names and credibility could help further, so the Sapps led the campaign and helped raise \$1.8 million that made the shelter a reality.

## 15. More Places of Interest

**GOLDSMITH-SCHIFFMAN FIELD.** On Ward Avenue in the northeast part of the city, this athletic field opened in 1954 and was the site of the city's first night game. The land had been donated to Huntsville by Oscar, son Lawrence, and Annie Goldsmith, and Robert and wife Elsie Schiffman, in memory of their wives and mothers. It was donated specifically for an athletic field.

Oscar Goldsmith was born in New York City in 1849. A job as a jewelry salesman took him through Huntsville, where he met and married Betty Bernstein. Here he set up a dry goods and clothing store, and later the Goldsmith Grocery Company. He helped get Dallas Mill to the city, was one of its major stock holders, and served as its treasurer. Oscar was also president of the Huntsville Land Company, one of the organizations that led to development of East Huntsville and the present Five Points area. He died in 1937.

Solomon and Daniel Schiffman came to the United States in 1857, Solomon to Cincinnati and Daniel to Paris, Kentucky. They moved to Huntsville before the Civil War and opened a dry goods and clothing business on the courthouse square. Isaac Schiffman, born in 1856 in Germany, came to Huntsville in 1875 to join his uncles, Solomon and Daniel. He married Bettie Herstein; their children were Robert, Irma, and Annie. In 1908 son Robert, by then grown, and son-in-law Lawrence Goldsmith joined the business, which had expanded into cotton and land leasing. Isaac died in 1910. That year, the business incorporated as I. Schiffman & Company. It still operates today at its courthouse square location. (See the **I. Schiffman Building**.)

**HARRIS HOME.** George Ernest Harris and his wife Chessie Walker Harris moved to Huntsville from Cleveland, Ohio, in 1950. George was grounds superintendent and farm manager, and Chessie was food service director, at Oakwood College. One by one they found homeless, neglected, or abandoned children and provided necessary foster care. In 1954 they founded the Harris Home for

## 15. More Places of Interest

Children. George sold the family farm in Ohio to fund the home. The home cared for about 40 children at any one time; during their lifetimes, the Harrises cared for over 900 children. The home that bears their name continues today as a privately owned foster-care agency for the Huntsville area and the state of Alabama. George died in 1988. Chessie, retired since 1980, still resides in Huntsville.

**JOE DAVIS STADIUM.** Joe W. Davis was elected mayor of Huntsville five times, serving for twenty years, from 1968 to 1988. One way to look at the length of his tenure is to realize that, when he took office, America had not gone to the moon; when he left office, the Apollo program was old history. During his years as mayor, Huntsville never had a budget deficit, and its credit rating was upgraded. His administration oversaw construction of the **Von Braun Civic Center**, a new library, and Interstate 565. But one of his favorite projects was for a stadium and a minor-league baseball team. When the stadium was constructed in record time so that the Huntsville Stars could begin play, the city council named the stadium after him. Davis died in 1992 at age 74.

Entrance to the stadium from Memorial Parkway is on **Mincher Road**, named for the president of the Southern (baseball) League, Don Mincher. Mincher was born in Huntsville in 1938, made it to the major leagues in 1960, played thirteen seasons (with Washington, Minnesota, California, and Oakland), was named to the 1967 and 1969 All-Star games, and played in the 1965 and 1972 World Series (winning with Oakland in the latter).

**MILTON FRANK STADIUM.** Milton Frank, originally from Nashville, starred on the football team at the University of Tennessee. Immediately after graduating in 1934, he came to Huntsville as teacher and football coach at Huntsville High School. He held those positions for twelve years. In 1946 Coach Frank, as he was known, left to become co-owner of Rose Jewelry Company; he was also vice-

## 15. More Places of Interest

president of a jewelry business in Mobile. The change gave Frank time to be active in civic affairs. He became president of the Shriners and the Optimist Club, board member of Christmas Charities and the Huntsville Industrial Expansion Committee, and for five years a director of the Boys Club - to name a few. Coach Frank died in 1967 at age 56. A few weeks before his death, the state legislature voted to change the name of Huntsville Stadium to Milton Frank Stadium.

**OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT.** This District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. It encompasses 229 buildings dating from 1850 with most originating from between 1870 and 1930. It is the only predominantly Victorian neighborhood in the city. The District is bounded by Walker Avenue to the north, Dement Street on the east, Randolph Street on the south, and Lincoln Street on the west.

**THOMAS W. DAVIDSON SENIOR CENTER.** In 2002, the Huntsville-Madison County Senior Center on Drake Avenue was renamed in memory of Thomas W. Davidson, Sr. He was the safety manager at Redstone Arsenal for over twenty years and had served on the Center's board of directors for over a dozen years, four times as its president. Davidson also helped plan and design the current facility, and played a significant role in obtaining financing for it.

**TWICKENHAM.** At one time LeRoy Pope, the richest man in the county with the most land, bought Hunt's Spring (then the name of the settlement) and the land surrounding it. He got friends in the Mississippi Territory Legislature to rename the community Twickenham and to make it the seat of "Old" Madison County. Twickenham was the home of English poet Alexander Pope, admired by, but apparently no relation to LeRoy.

But settlers didn't like the name - some were jealous of Pope, others were mad at England with the War of 1812

## 15. More Places of Interest

beginning. So in 1811 local citizens were able to get the legislature to change the name again - to the present one that honors original settler John Hunt.

**TWICKENHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT.** This District was designated by the City of Huntsville in 1972 and added to the National Register of Historical Places a year later. The District contains 111 buildings, including one of the largest concentrations of ante-bellum homes in the South - more than 65 such buildings dating from as early as 1814. The District is bounded by Randolph Avenue on the north, California Street on the east, Lowe Avenue on the south, and Franklin Street on the west.

**VON BRAUN CIVIC CENTER.** During the 1960s numerous civic and arts groups combined with city officials to try to get some sort of theater/museum/convention building. In 1975 their dream was realized with the opening of the Von Braun Civic Center. It contains a small theater, large concert hall, art museum, 8,500-seat arena, and exhibition hall. It is named for Huntsville's most widely known citizen, Wernher von Braun. Von Braun may be known to outsiders as a foremost rocket scientist from another country. But he was also a man who took time to be part of the Huntsville community, and participated in and helped promote numerous civic and arts endeavors.

Von Braun was born in Germany in 1912. He held a bachelor's degree from the Berlin Institute of Technology and a doctor's degree in physics from the University of Berlin. He received a grant from the German Ordnance Department, and a rocket group was organized at Peenemunde in 1937. They developed a ballistic missile eventually designated the V-2 (V for vengeance) and used against Great Britain in World War II. At the end of the war, von Braun and his top engineers surrendered to the U.S. Army and were offered the opportunity to continue their work, first in Texas, then at Redstone Arsenal.

## 15. More Places of Interest

Under von Braun's direction, the Army produced the Redstone rocket and Jupiter intermediate range ballistic missile. In 1958 a modified Redstone (the Jupiter C) put the first U.S. satellite into orbit. In 1960, the newly formed National Aeronautics and Space Administration took over von Braun's team and created the **Marshall Space Flight Center**, separate from the Army facilities but still at Redstone Arsenal. Von Braun continued development of larger rockets, including the Saturn I, the IB used for the Apollo program, and the Saturn V, which enabled man to go to the moon.

In 1970, von Braun moved to Washington to become NASA's Deputy Associate Administrator for Planning. In 1972 he joined private industry as vice-president of Fairchild Industries. Fairchild had gotten into the satellite business, and von Braun - ahead of his time as usual - envisioned development of satellites for mapping, navigation, weather prediction, and worldwide communications. Von Braun died in 1977.

**WEEDEN HOUSE MUSEUM.** Two years after the Weedens moved to Huntsville in 1832 (see **Weeden Mountain**), Dr. Weeden died leaving five small children - and a sixth, Maria Howard, arrived six months later. After the Civil War, Mrs. Weeden divided the property of the estate among her children, and left her home on Gates Avenue to unmarried daughters Howard and Kate. Howard painted with water colors, mostly portraits of old ex-slaves and the Negro servants of her neighbors. She also recorded their stories in poems written in Negro dialect. She became nationally known when her books of poetry and paintings were published. There are four: *Shadows on the Wall* (1898), *Bandanna Ballads* (1899), *Songs of the Old South* (1900), and *Old Voices* (1904).

Howard died in 1910, Kate in 1918. The house passed through several owners and was finally sold to the Huntsville Housing Authority in 1976, from which it is

## **15. More Places of Interest**

leased and operated by the Huntsville Historical Association as a museum.

**WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.** This refuge stretches along both sides of the Tennessee River in Limestone, Morgan, and Madison counties, mostly between Decatur and Huntsville. It was established in 1938 and covers 34,000 acres.

The refuge is named for General “Fighting Joe” Wheeler. A West Point graduate, but commanding Confederate forces in the Civil War, Wheeler was in 500 skirmishes and commanded 127 full-scale battles. After the war, Wheeler served as U.S. Representative from Alabama in 1881 to 1882, in 1883, and from 1885 to 1900. At age 62, he volunteered at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War and became the only Confederate general to gain that rank again in the U.S. Army as he led a cavalry unit in Cuba. As if that weren’t enough, he served further in the Philippines insurrection of 1899 and 1900. Wheeler died in 1906.

**WILLIAMS WELL.** Five wells and two surface treatment plants (the South Parkway and Southwest Huntsville plants) provide water to Huntsville customers through 1,000 miles of water mains, 32 reservoirs, and 32 pumping stations. (In August 2000, a record was set as 1.7 billion gallons were provided that month alone.) The wells are those of the old mills, Dallas, Lincoln, and Lowe, plus Hampton Cove and Williams. The Williams well is located west of the city, and is named for James Williams, the land owner in that area.

All this may seem like trivia - unless you’re in Huntsville and want a glass of clean water.

## 16. STILL MORE NAMES

Back on page 4 I wrote that “one of the most difficult decisions a writer faces is deciding when to stop writing.” I haven’t stopped. While this book was being designed, laid out, and indexed, I kept finding out about more names, hence this little addendum.

**CECIL ASHBURN DRIVE.** Cecil Ashburn grew up learning about roads - his grandfather was one of Madison County’s early road commissioners. Then during World War II, Ashburn served with the Army Corps of Engineers and Seabees. When the war was over, it was no surprise when he got into the road construction business. In 1946, he and his uncle, Pat Gray, formed Ashburn & Gray. From the 1950s to 1970s, the firm built many of the area streets and roads traveled today - Memorial Parkway, most of University Drive, some of I-565, the roads at Huntsville International Airport and even its runways - to name a few. Perhaps the toughest was Governors Drive, over rocky Monte Sano, to where Hampton Cove is now. When the latest road in that direction, Four Mile Post Road extended, was completed, the city named it in honor of Cecil Ashburn.

Gray died in 1970. Ashburn & Gray was sold to APAC-Alabama. Ashburn, retired, still lives in Huntsville.

**CLOPTON STREET.** It’s in the Huntsville Park area, and not a major thoroughfare, but it’s worth noting because its name honors Anne Bradshaw Clopton, one of the city’s most famous artists. Starting as a teenager in the 1890s, Anne successfully captured spider webs and developed a dot-by-dot technique of painting on them. She exhibited at the 1896 St. Louis World’s Fair, in the 1930s and 1940s was featured on CBS radio, and demonstrated her paintings at the 1939 New York World’s Fair. By the time of her

## 16. Still More Names

death in 1956, Anne had painted over 600 cobweb pictures. Some remain in private collections. The Burritt Museum has twenty, but they are so fragile they are specially boxed and no longer on public display.

**ELON.** This tiny community is on Hobbs Island Road just west of New Hope. Oak trees abound. Elon is the Hebrew word for oak.

**JIM WHITAKER HIGHWAY.** Close to mile marker 318, south of Owens Cross Roads, on U.S. 431, there's a state-erected green sign naming the road the "Jim Whitaker Highway." It's named for the asphalt businessman who heads Whitaker Contracting Corporation in Guntersville, whose company built and paved the highway - and many other highways throughout northern Alabama.

**MAX LUTHER DRIVE.** Max Agrippa Luther was born in Albertville in 1908. He moved to Huntsville in the mid-1930s. His home, on a couple hundred acres, was on Meridian Street next to the road that today bears his name.

Luther became one of the city's most successful cotton brokers. The Max Luther Cotton Company was part of the old Cotton Row buildings on West Side Square. Luther did business with the New Orleans and Memphis Cotton Exchanges - so much so that when he died in 1955, the New Orleans Exchange closed for the day in his honor. Luther is buried in Maple Hill Cemetery.

Luther was an avid horseman, raising saddle and harness horses. In the late 1940s he had a little mare called Sally Co-Ed that could do three gaits. He took her to shows in the Kentucky horse country where she won many times. He finally took her to Madison Square Garden in New York City. I'm told there's a photo of Luther and the mare at that show, Luther in tuxedo and the required derby, and all the attendees in formal dress. And that the trip with his little prize-winning mare made for one of his proudest moments.

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## **SOME CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS**

This is the second printing of this book, not a new edition, and only pages 2, 3, and these two have been changed.

Between the original edition of the book in the summer of 2003 and this printing in March 2005, readers have pointed out errors and sent in welcome comments. Because these two pages "were available," those comments are presented back here rather than in the text, which would have necessitated major page number changes and a new index.

**GOLDSMITH-SCHIFFMAN FIELD** (p. 109). The field opened in 1934, not in 1954.

**HARRIS HOME** (p. 110). Chessie Harris died in 1997 at age 91.

**MONROVIA** (p. 18). Several people have said the area was named by a settler - name and date as yet not found - from Monroe or Monrovia, Indiana.

**RUSSEL ERSKINE APARTMENTS** (p. 79). Erskine did not put up the needed money for the hotel. He did require that the hotel bear his name, but when it came time to invest, he was one of 55 investors and bought 100 shares at \$100 each, only 5.6% of the total, much to the disappointment of the builders.

**TERRY-HUTCHENS BUILDING** (p. 81). Eleanor Hutchens has written that the building had the same owners from its construction in 1925. "I told my father [Morton Huntchens], when he showed me the text for the plaque, that it would make people think the ... building was built in

1944. ... They had it named after first one tenant, then another, until they decided to name it for themselves.”

**WALL-TRIANA HIGHWAY** (p. 30). Arthur Wall’s grand nieces Jean Wall Lemley and Rebecca Wall have written that the Wall family has always been told that the north portion of the highway was named for Arthur L. Wall, county commissioner of District 4 when the road was built. They found minutes of commission meetings that state for August 15, 1927, “Paid A.L. Wall survey new road” and for September 5, 1927, “Paid H.C. Turner \$175.80 for work on ‘Wall Highway’,” first time that term appears.

**WALTON’S MOUNTAIN** (p. 24). The Fleming family has pointed out that they gave the land for the extension of Airport Road over the hill (Garth Mountain) and that Airport Road does not give way to Carl T. Jones Drive until the valley is reached.

**WEATHERLY ROAD** (p. 63). Peter Weatherly purchased land in 1853, not in 1823.

## INDEX

This index contains all major headings and bold-face entries that are in the book. Where there is more than one page reference, the main entry is cited first. Individual names do not appear. For example, Joe Davis Stadium is an entry, but Davis, Joe, is not.

- Ada Lee Thurber  
    Rotunda.....73  
Adams Street.....35  
Airport Road.....52  
Alabama..... 9  
Alabama A&M  
    University.....85  
Alan B. Shepard  
    Highway.....52  
Aldridge Creek.....21  
Andrew Jackson Way....46  
Annie C. Merts Center...93  
Army Airforce Memorials98
- Bailey Cove Road.....52  
Balch Road.....31  
Bankhead Parkway.....53  
Bankhead Highway.....53  
Becky Peirce  
    Municipal Golf Course104  
Beirne Avenue.....46  
Bell Factory..... 12, 36, 62  
Ben Graves Drive.....89  
Benton H. Wilcoxon  
    Ice Complex..... 104  
Berachah Gym.....69  
Bessie K. Russell  
    Branch Library.....83
- Bevill Center.....89  
Bide-A-Wee Drive.....53  
Billy Hunter Park.....69  
Blackwell Tower.....73  
Blevins Gap Road.....53  
Blue Springs Road.....54  
Bob Jones Auditorium..100  
Bob Jones High School..93  
Bobo.....12  
Bob Wade Lane.....26  
Bob Wallace Avenue....54  
Braham Spring.....104  
Brown, Rufus P.....107  
Browns Ferry Road.....26  
Buckhorn.....13  
Burose Road.....100  
Burritt Museum.....105  
Buttermilk Alley.....32  
Buxton Road.....101  
Byrd Spring Road.....54
- Calhoun  
    Community College....90  
California Street.....55  
Capt. Trey Wilbourn  
    Model Airplane Park...72  
Carl T. Jones Drive..56, 58  
Carl T. Jones Field.....59

## Index

- Capshaw Road .....26  
 Cavalry Hill.....69  
 Cecil Ashburn Drive .... 115  
 Cecil Fain Drive.....56  
 C.F. Bost Building.....74  
 Chapman Mountain.....21  
 Chase.....13  
 Church Street.....35  
 Clay Bridge..... 106  
 Clay House Museum ....32  
 Clinton Avenue.....36  
 Clopton Street..... 115  
 Cluttsville ..... 13  
 Councill Boulevard.....85  
 Councill Boys & Girls  
     Club.....86  
 Councill Court.....76  
 Countess Road .....27  
 Cummings  
     Research Park..... 106  
  
 Dallas Street ..... 47, 45  
 Dan ..... 14  
 Deposit ..... 14  
 Ditto Landing..... 14  
 Downtown  
     Rescue Mission ..... 107  
 Drake Avenue ..... 57, 58  
 Drake Mountain ..... 57  
 Dred Scott Home Site .... 87  
 Dr. Richard Showers, Sr.  
     Recreation Center..... 70  
 Dublin Park..... 70, 33  
  
 Echols Avenue .....36  
 Echols Hill..... 21, 37  
 Elbert H. Parsons  
     Law Library ..... 74  
 Eleanor Murphy  
     Branch Library..... 83  
  
 Elizabeth Carpenter  
     Branch Library..... 84  
 Elon .....116  
 Eustis Avenue..... 37  
 Eva B. Dykes Library,  
     Archives, and Museum 88  
  
 Fagan Creek..... 21, 66  
 Fannings Crossing ..... 15  
 Farley ..... 15  
 Faulkner University ..... 91  
 Fern Bell Park..... 71  
 Fisk..... 15  
 Five Points Historic  
     District ..... 46  
 Floyd E. "Tut" Fann  
     State Veterans Home... 75  
 Ford's Chapel Road..... 27  
 Four Mile Post Road ..... 57  
 Fox Hospital ..... 98  
 Franklin Street ..... 37  
 Front Street..... 31  
  
 Gallatin Street ..... 38  
 Garth Mountain ..... 22  
 Garth Road .....58, 56, 57  
 Gates Avenue ..... 38  
 Glenn Hearn Parkway ... 59  
 Goddard House..... 98  
 Goldsmith-Schiffman  
     Field.....109, 50  
 Gooch Lane ..... 33  
 Goss Road.....101  
 Governors Drive..... 58  
 Greene Street..... 38  
 Green Mountain..... 22  
 Grissom High School .... 94  
 Grote, Drs. Carl A..... 74  
 Gurley..... 16

## Index

- Hale Road.....98  
Halsey Grocery .....75  
Hampton Cove .....16  
Harbinville.....16  
Harris Home.....109, 99  
Harrison Brothers  
    Hardware Store .....75  
Harvest.....17  
Hazel Green .....17  
Heflin Buildings .....100  
Hobbs Island.....17  
Hobbs Island Road.....58  
Holmes Avenue .....38  
Housing Authority  
    Buildings .....76  
Houston Goodson Way..59  
Hughes Road.....33  
Humes Avenue.....48  
Huntsville.....10  
Huntsville Arsenal ..97, 101  
Huntsville Arsenal  
    CWS Roads .....101  
Huntsville Park.....78
- I. Schiffman  
    Building.....77, 109
- James Record Road.....59  
J.D. and Annie S. Hays  
    Nature Preserve.....71  
Jeff.....17  
Jefferson Street.....39  
J.F. Drake  
    State Technical School .91  
Jim Whitaker Highway. 116  
Jim Williams Aquatic  
    Center .....71  
Joe Davis Stadium .....110  
Joe Quick Road .....27  
John Hunt Park .....71, 52  
John J. Sparkman  
    Center.....96, 65  
Johnson Towers .....76  
John St. Clair Road .....43  
John Wright Drive.....89  
J.O. Johnson  
    High School.....95  
Jones Valley.....56, 58, 65  
Jordan Lane .....59
- Keel Mountain .....22  
Keel Mountain Road ....22  
Ken Johnston Park .....72  
Kent Robertson Park....72  
King Drake Road.....57
- Lakeview Drive .....61  
Lakewood Park .....61  
Lee High School.....95  
Leeman Ferry Road .....60  
Lewis Crews Physical  
    Education Complex 86, 67  
Lily Flagg Road.....60  
Lincoln Center .....78  
Lincoln Street .....40, 68  
Loeffler Park .....98  
Lombardo Building.....78  
Lowe Avenue .....40
- Madison.....31, 66  
Madison County .....9  
Madison Street .....41  
Madkin Mountain....22, 68  
Marshall Space Flight  
    Center.....102, 113  
Martin Road .....101  
Mason Court .....76  
Mastin Lake Road .....61  
Max Luther Drive.....116  
Maysville .....18

## Index

- McClung Avenue ..... 41  
McCullough Avenue..... 48  
McGucken Park..... 72  
McKinley Avenue..... 48  
McKissack,  
    Dr. William M..... 74  
Medaris Drive ..... 61  
Memorial Parkway..... 62  
Meridian Street ..... 62  
Merrimack Mall ..... 78  
Merrimack Park..... 78  
Milton Frank Stadium .. 110  
Mincher Road ..... 110  
Miss Eloise Walker  
    Building..... 108  
Monroe Street ..... 41  
Monrovia..... 18  
Monte Sano Mountain.... 23  
Moontown ..... 18  
Moores Mill..... 18  
Moores Mill Road..... 28  
Moquin Drive..... 107  
  
Neal Road..... 101  
Nebo..... 18  
New Hope ..... 19  
New Market ..... 19  
Nick Davis Road..... 29  
  
Oakwood College ..... 87  
Old Town  
    Historic District ..... 111  
Ordnance Roads..... 102  
Oscar Mason  
    Community Center ..... 76  
Oscar Mason  
    Branch Library..... 84  
Old Railroad Bed Road... 29  
Opp Reynolds Road ..... 29  
O'Shaughnessy Avenue.. 49  
  
Owens Crossroads ..... 19  
Palmer Park ..... 34  
Palmer Road..... 34  
Patton Road ..... 62, 101  
Paul Bolden Military  
    Museum Building ..... 79  
Pill Hill..... 23  
Pinhook Creek ..... 23  
Plevna..... 19  
Pratt Avenue..... 49  
Pulaski Pike ..... 63  
  
Rainbow Mountain .. 24, 34  
Randolph Street..... 42  
Ready Section Road..... 29  
Redstone Arsenal ..... 97  
Rhett, Harry Moore ..... 74  
Rideout Road..... 101  
Rison Avenue ..... 50  
Roberts Drive ..... 102  
Roberts Hall..... 89  
Russel Erskine  
    Apartments ..... 79, 67  
Russel Hill..... 24, 80  
Ryland ..... 19  
  
Sapp Shelter for  
    Women and Children . 108  
Searcy Homes..... 76  
Sharon Johnston Park... 72  
Sharp Mountain..... 24  
Shelby Center ..... 100  
S.H. Kress Building ..... 80  
Slaughter Road..... 34  
Sparkman Drive..... 63  
Sparkman High School .. 96  
Sparkman Homes..... 76  
Spragins Street..... 42, 106  
S.R. Butler High School 94

## Index

- St. Clair Avenue .....43  
Steger Road.....30  
Steger's Store .....30  
Stevens Avenue .....50  
Sullivan Street.....34  
Swancott .....20
- Teal, Mollie.....73  
Terry-Hutchens Building 81  
Thomas W. Davidson  
    Senior Center..... 111  
Tillman Hill  
    Branch Library.....84  
Times Building .....81  
Todd Towers .....77  
Toftoy Thruway..... 103  
Toney.....20  
Triana.....20  
Twickenham..... 111  
Twickenham  
    Historic District ..... 112
- University of Alabama -  
    Huntsville.....89
- Valim Reservoir.....98  
Vincent Drive..... 103
- Von Braun  
    Civic Center..... 112, 110
- Wall-Triana Highway .... 30  
Walton's Mountain ..... 24  
Ward Avenue.....50  
Ward Mountain .....24  
Washington Street .....44  
Weatherly Road.....63  
Weeden House Museum 113  
Weeden  
    Mountain ..... 25, 68, 113  
Wellman Avenue.....51  
Wellman Family Park .... 51  
Wells Avenue .....51  
Wheeler National  
    Wildlife Refuge.....114  
Whitesburg Drive.....63  
White Street .....55  
Williams Street..... 44, 39  
Williams Well .....114  
Wilson Building .....87  
Winchester Road.....30  
W.T. Hutchens Building 82  
Wynn Drive .....64
- Yarbrough Building ..... 82  
Zierdt Road.....103

## **Why Is It Named That?**

### **Errata and Still More Comments**

- On p. 36, George Clinton did not come in second in the popular vote. He became vice president via votes in the Electoral College in both 1804 and 1808.
- Re JORDAN LANE, p. 59, Doris Jordan Myers writes from Massillon, Ohio, that it is named for her grandfather, John Jordan, who donated the land for the road so people could get their crops to market. Doris grew up on the family farm, one taken by the government when it created Huntsville Arsenal in 1941.
- On p. 60, according to Doris Gilbreath's book *Lily Flagg*, our famous cow's official name was Signal's Lily Flagg. The World's Fair program was not correct.
- Under WEATHERLY ROAD, Peter Weatherly bought land in 1833, not in 1823 (p. 63) and not in 1853 (p. 123).
- At the bottom of p. 122, Huntchens should be spelled Hutchens.



## Do You Know

What "Alabama" means?

What Holmes and Williams did for the country?

Whom Lincoln Street is named for?

Where the rainbow is in Rainbow Mountain?

Why things are called "Twickenham"?

How Redstone Arsenal's roads got named?

The creek that's named for the town barber?

You can find the answers – and much more – in this little book.

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of towns, mountains, rivers, county roads,  
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