

# INTRODUCTION

This publication, which is being sponsored by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, contains a brief history of the land transactions which started and later expanded the boundaries of Maple Hill Cemetery, one of the oldest public cemeteries in Alabama. It also includes the location and descriptions of the markers and monuments in the fifteen oldest sections in the cemetery. This compilation was made possible through the work of Diane Robey who, over a period of twenty years, researched and recorded with painstaking exactness the inscriptions on each tombstone. Unfortunately, Diane Robey did not live to see her work published, but it was her hope that any profit derived from this project would be dedicated to a perpetual care fund for Maple Hill Cemetery.

Some ten years ago the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association was organized to sponsor the showing of homes in the two historic districts of Huntsville. Profits from this annual event go toward the restoration of broken monuments in the oldest sections of the cemetery, especially those headstones marking the graves of prominent Huntsvillians without local descendants. All profits from the sale of this volume will go into a perpetual care fund to assure that restoration continues in the oldest sections of the cemetery.

Today Maple Hill Cemetery has reached near full capacity; in a certain sense, property in Maple Hill is among the most desirable in the city. The general serenity of the area, the splendid colors of the dogwood trees in the spring and fall, the literal "presence" of history makes this spot a truly peaceful park for Huntsville's citizenry. Researchers, strollers, joggers are seen in the area daily.

Every effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the material contained in this volume. It must be noted, however, that the ravages of time have defaced some monuments, making it difficult to verify inscriptions, especially dates. The authors hope there is minimal error. Each section contains the final date the stones were verified, and no burials after that date were entered.

Committee members from the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society who worked on finalizing the project include Dorothy Scott Johnson, John Rison Jones, Jr., and Frances C. Roberts. Dorothy Johnson labored to transcribe Diane Robey's field notes and prepared that part of the manuscript for publication. John Rison Jones, Jr. and Frances C. Roberts provided historical notations and compiled the brief history of the cemetery. In addition to these three individuals, the committee wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Brenda Webb, who has the responsibility for oversight of all cemeteries in the city; Nan Hall for editorial help; George Mahoney for technical advice; Ranee Pruitt and Denise Terry for library assistance, and Betty Frazier who preserved and protected Diane Robey's efforts. The architectural firm of Jones and Herrin reproduced the cemetery map, the Huntsville Museum of Art provided the John Reese photographs, Stuart Siniad enhanced the antique photograph of the cemetery, and John Rison Jones, Jr. provided the remaining photography.

This volume covers only the oldest fifteen sections of the cemetery, and it is hoped that its publication will inspire future researchers to continue the work and record the remaining sections before the information is lost to the ravages of weather, vandals, and unintentional damage from maintenance machinery.