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Marker Dedication--October 20, 1985

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

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On October 20, 1985, the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society met at Ditto's Landing to dedicate the historical marker commemorating that site, as well as honoring James Ditto and Colonel James White, both of whom were instrumental in the early establishment of that area. Among those present were descendants of the two personalities who helped to shape the early history of Madison County. Those individuals representing James Ditto were Mrs. Margaret Lowe, Mrs. Mary Cooke, and Mrs. Ruth P. Petty. Descendants of Colonel White who attended were Mrs. Margaret Henson, Mrs. Jane F. Scott, Mrs. Suzie Scott Smith, and Mr. James M. White.

The ceremony began at 3:00 p.m. with an invocation given by the Rev. Henry M. Williams, pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Huntsville, Alabama. Dr. Frances C. Roberts, Emerita Professor of History at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, then introduced the first speaker, Dr. Kenneth Johnson, Professor of History at the University of North Alabama, Florence, Alabama.

Dr. Johnson, whose presentation was entitled, "Transportation Influences in Westward Expansion," spoke on the importance of Ditto's Landing. The landing was later incorporated as Whitesburg on December 23, 1824, in honor of Colonel White of Abingdon, Virginia, who "established a thriving port at this location," according to the marker. Dr. Johnson, moreover, pointed out the larger role that the Tennessee River played in the settlement of the "Old Southwest" which was vital to the economic and social well-being of the early American nation.
Among the early pioneers who helped to settle the "Old Southwest" was James Ditto, who established a ferry at the landing in 1807. William J. Stubno, local historian and Treasurer of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, gave the second presentation on this elusive historical personality. He introduced documented evidence, proving that James Ditto indeed established Ditto's Landing along the banks of the Tennessee River south of Huntsville.

Upon the conclusion of the second presentation, James Record, a former President of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society and retired Chairman of the Madison County Commission, presented the marker. Dr. Johnson accepted it on behalf of the Alabama Historical Association. The marker, paid for out of funds from an anonymous donor, was then viewed by special guests and by others in attendance.

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