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## Fragments from a Newcomer's Kaleidoscope: First Impressions of Huntsville

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## Fragments from a Newcomer's Kaleidoscope: First Impressions of Huntsville

Diane Ellis

*Rust-red earth ... clayey ... can't be cotton country down there. Cotton grows in the Mississippi Delta and someplace called the Black Belt, doesn't it? Look, it's flat over there by the airport, but those hills in the distance don't look agricultural. I wonder what went on around here before this place became the Rocket City?*

A newcomer's first impressions about a place can sure be off the mark — especially a Yankee newcomer's notions about a place in the South. In her book *Alabama: A History*, Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton exposed one Yankee's ignorance about the South's most famous crop with the story of the soldier who, more familiar with coats of Union wool than Confederate cotton, astonished a resident of Louisville, Alabama by asking her to identify the white flowers growing in a nearby field. I can sympathize with the fellow. On a July day shortly after I arrived in Huntsville, I found myself stopping by a field to peer closely at some unfamiliar plants and their blossoms. I thought they were probably cotton plants, but, by now having read Hamilton's anecdote, I didn't feel like asking questions for fear of being the latest laughingstock from the North. It was only in October, when I saw, near Madison, the vast cocoa-colored fields sprinkled with their unmistakable snowy crop that I realized Huntsville was indeed cotton country.

Well, perhaps a newcomer may be forgiven for not getting it right at first: The experiences of one's early days in a city create colorful but fragmentary first impressions, not the whole mosaic. Still, even an unfinished painting can illustrate truth, and a newcomer's views offer a fresh perspective on things that old-timers may take for granted.

I've gathered the fragments of my first impressions of Huntsville and examined them against the patterns of other places and experiences. I scatter these images here before they fade, and before the time comes when I can no longer plead "newcomer" as an excuse for ignorance and wrong turns. Before long, I'll be expected to know the identity of the mystery mansion on Kildare near Oakwood and the difference between mustard greens and collards, and to enjoy sweetened iced tea and unsweetened corn bread. My kaleidoscope will glitter with new fragments, and when someone asks, "Where are you from?" I'll answer without hesitation, "Oh, Huntsville, Alabama!"

### TIME TRAVELER

*"Yes, ma'am" and "no, sir" ... dip dogs at the Zesto for 89 cents and grilled cheese sandwiches at Mullins for a dollar. ... grocery clerks who not only carry groceries to your car but also unload them from your basket to the check-out counter ... neighborhoods ... front porches and porch swings and front doors open late on summer nights ... storm cellars ... bungalows ... hipped roofs, peaked roofs, tin roofs and more tin roofs ...*

Coming to Huntsville from the East Coast megalopolis was like entering a time-warp. Not that Huntsville is a slow and sleepy Mayberry. People here certainly drive like Yankees, going Northerners one better by disdaining the use of the turn signal. And it isn't that progress and modernism have bypassed the city; Huntsville is a cosmopolitan city and a locus of leading-edge technology whose showcase — the U.S. Space & Rocket Center — is also the state's leading tourist attraction. The city encourages new ventures and the newspapers are full of plans for future growth.

Yet, when I came to Huntsville I had a strong feeling of stepping into the past — not the expected romanticized antebellum past, but a familiar past of my own experience. I grew up in the Midwest and in Connecticut with no first-

hand knowledge of the South till I was an adult. Why did I have this feeling of *deja vu* and even a growing sense of longing? After awhile I began to realize that what I was feeling was a catch-in-the-throat nostalgia for a 1940s and '50s childhood, triggered by the remnants of life in those decades that are still present in Huntsville. Bargain prices for lunch counter "fast food"; old-fashioned bungalows with porches where families idle away summer nights telling stories; warm greetings between friends and good manners between strangers; neighborhood restaurants where everyone knows everyone else; a "downtown" I might have visited as a child, these are some of the small-town pleasures I remembered from my childhood and rediscovered in Huntsville.

To my surprise, many Huntsville residents seem nostalgic for that time, too, and even for the earlier years of this century. In a Civil War town rich in antebellum structures and home to families that were here before 1861, I expected constant encounters with stories about life in the Old South, with Civil War heroes and demure belles and old plantations. In fact, it's the recent past that I've heard more about, the days when Huntsville was truly a cotton town and textile producer, before the dawning of the Space Age. For many, it is the mill that's remembered, not the mansion.

### THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THE SOUTH!

*Magnolias and crape myrtle ... storytelling ... family trees ... Southern hospitality ... hushpuppies and barbecue ... Temperance Street ... grits ... the kindness of strangers ... teetotalers ... debutante balls for dogs ... "Christian Painters" ... churches! ...*

"Oh, Huntsville's not like the rest of the South, or even Alabama," I heard so often after I arrived. But to a Yankee newcomer, there's still plenty about Huntsville that is very Southern indeed. One of my delights has been experiencing first hand those aspects of the South that I'd read so much about in the literature of the region.

More than any other American geographical section, the South retains distinctive traits. These can be puzzling, or maddening, or endearing, but they're never boring. Even in the midst of this bustling, high-tech city with its New South outlook and international population (a WLRH library report said that of the library's collection of foreign language films on videocassette, more are in Chinese than any other foreign language), the regional characteristics are all here: the penchant for storytelling, the intense ancestor worship and preoccupation with genealogy, old-time religion, temperance, and hospitality.

The oral tradition, for example, is alive and well in Huntsville. On our first trips to the city to buy furniture and arrange for the services we would need, my husband and I never could finish half our errands because everyone had a story to tell. Selling a sofa was secondary to relating an account of growing up with an errant father ("Daddy always had money, but he never spent it at home"). The washer and dryer could wait; there were views on the best fishing holes to exchange. One had to be patient. After awhile we fell into the rhythm of these ceremonies and got to like the stories and to value the personal interest that underlay strangers' inquiries about us. Back East, there isn't time for these exchanges. Life's too intense, things move too fast, people are too guarded. Trying to be friendly with strangers would, as a friend once said about trying to drive courteously in Boston, just complicate things.

I began to get an idea of why the narrative tradition is so strong in this part of the world when amusing things reminiscent of a Flannery O'Connor tale started happening soon after I arrived. I wasn't in Alabama three weeks before I'd won — what else? — a watermelon. But not an ordinary watermelon. Mine was an exploding watermelon. Shortly after I brought the prize home, I heard a groaning sound coming from it and noticed that it looked a little frothy. Then I read the newspaper stories about watermelons afflicted with a disease that caused them to explode. I quickly disposed of mine while it was still in a pre-

detonation state of ooze, but the reality of exploding watermelons made me wonder what I was in for in my new home. A few days later, suffering from the allergies Huntsville natives had warned me about, and feeling near death's door, I heard footsteps on the front porch and opened the door to find two earnest young women wanting to sell me cemetery plots. How did they know??

Southern storytelling, of course, glows with colorful language, and since I've been in Alabama I've encountered wonderful expressions: "poor as Job's turkey" and "common as pig tracks" (gleaned from Virginia Foster Durr's autobiography), and the doleful imagery of "alcohol put patches on my jeans," learned from Mississippi friends. More sparkle was added to this tradition one evening when a Huntsville television weather reporter predicted that the night would be "warm and starry."

The narratives included talk about who is "kin" to whom, and how and when, and what the consequences of that kinship are. Even when folks aren't connected by blood or marriage, everyone seems to know everyone else. It's difficult to sort all this out. Trying to untangle the skein of relationships that binds Huntsvillians past and present is not for the fainthearted; anyone wanting to do so should first practice on something simple, like the family tree of the House of Hapsburg. Southern ancestor worship is itself storytelling material. According to our Mississippi friends, the poet Louis Untermeyer was once invited to speak to a group of Southern women. After long thought about what topic to lecture on, he decided to discuss the mead-hall in early English poetry. He delivered his lecture to an attentive audience, and afterwards an excited woman hurried to the podium. "Oh, Mr. Untermeyer," she beamed, "I so much enjoyed your lecture: my mother was a Mead!"

In truth, coming from a part of the country where so many people are in transit, and where family ties and connections to a hometown have weakened or disappeared, I find the continuity of these relationships reassuring. Many

descendants of early citizens still live here. Streets are named for forebears of current residents. This continuity contributes to Huntsville's high level of historical consciousness and strong sense of identity and guarantees a core of citizens determined to preserve the city's treasures, tangible and intangible. This continuity also contributes to the special civic pride that defines Huntsville, a community spirit so contagious that even a newcomer feels responsible for preserving the city's unique characteristics.

Southern historical continuity also persists in the presence of old-time religion. Churches, high and mighty, and low and modest, dominate the landscape and the culture. here are churches in humble garages and churches with magnificent mosaics that allude to modern exploration of the heavens; storefront churches and churches that might have been lifted intact from an English town; sprawling suburban churches that seem to be complete communities unto themselves; and churches with marvelous names and mysterious theologies: Full Gospel Church of Deliverance, Restoration Foursquare Church, Truth Independent (an alarming notion to a born-and-bred Catholic!) Baptist Church, and the confident Unfailing Love Fellowship. Here are Living Christmas Trees and Live Nativities.

Old-time religion appears, too, in an ad for "housecleaning by Christian sisters," in a sign on a panel truck advertising "The Christian Painters," and in the assumption underlying the question I've been asked several times: "What church do you attend?" This is a question that never would have been asked in other places I've lived. At first I was shocked by it, but I began to realize that it was asked in a friendly spirit of invitation and - in the same way one might be asked about family connections - was meant. as Virginia Durr writes, to "place" me.

Old-time religion also plays a major role in the South's attitudes towards drinking. The temperance tradition is especially strong in a homogeneous population with little influence from ethnic groups whose cuisines and rituals

include alcohol. I imagine Huntsville is probably more liberal than much of Alabama, but still there are laws here that stem from strong religious views about drinking. Surprisingly, beer and wine are sold in that respectable venue, the supermarket. But not on Sunday, not even non-alcoholic beer. And you have to carry it out in a bag. It does encourage one to skulk. Occasionally, I've sensed a touch of defensiveness on the part of wine and beer buyers at the supermarket and disapproval of these purchases from other shoppers. There are also euphemisms. Some convenience stores and mini-marts advertise their alcoholic wares as "beverages," like the Victorians, whose sensibilities led them to refer discreetly even to piano legs as "limbs."

On the matter of religion, I'm still trying to figure out the link between the gospel and football. I know there is one because football keeps cropping up in religious contexts, sometimes sharing equal billing with the presumed Object of one's attention. I've heard a minister discuss football scores during a sermon, and have witnessed the introduction of a visiting clergyman to a business group as the spiritual adviser to two famous college coaches.

Finally, Huntsvillians have turned the good old tradition of Southern hospitality into a fine art. To newcomers, they are kind, generous, and genuinely concerned about the new arrivals' well-being. Courtesy is the medium of exchange between folks going about their business. There is also extensive entertaining in Huntsville, which reinforces all kinds of relationships while upholding the reputation Southerners have for loving a good party.

### THE LADIES: TIME TRAVELING AGAIN

*Women who don't work outside the home ... women who don't work outside the home AND have maids! women who are called "ladies" and don't object ... fashion plates ... volunteers!*



I suspected that women might occupy a different social position here from that of women in the Northeast when I noticed that almost all the business, professional, and military travelers at the airport were men. Although I haven't seen the statistics, it appears that there are far fewer working women here than in many other parts of the country, where women who don't hold jobs outside the home are often hard to find. In Delaware, for example, activities for women wouldn't be scheduled during the day, and one would find nowhere near the number of teas, luncheons, fashion shows, fundraisers, and similar "women's" gatherings. And in Huntsville, women are often still called "ladies." Other little clues suggest that the participation of women in business and the professions is not fully realized: signs in a downtown parking garage advise their customers that certain "businessmen and professional firms will validate parking fees for customers and clients;" guest nametags for meetings of a business and professional service organization anticipate only male attire when they instruct the wearer to "slide card into breast pocket."

Women aren't as involved in politics here as they are in the North either. Of 140 Alabama state legislators, eight (about 5 percent) are women. Only Kentucky and Louisiana have fewer women in their legislatures. Huntsville has no women on its city council. There isn't even a chapter of the League of Women Voters in the city. Politics is a man's game here. Yet women are especially qualified for political leadership: they have always been experts, for example, on the very issues that need so much attention — education, social welfare, health care, and the family. And studies show that women, perhaps because they are culturally conditioned to seek harmony and avoid confrontation, are adept at conflict resolution and consensual decision-making and problem-solving — good skills for legislators.

If men and women play distinctly different roles here, occupying "separate spheres," to recall again the Victorians, it's the boardroom and legislature's loss, but the city of Huntsville's gain. Scores of talented and capable women

have contributed their energies, commitment, and creativity toward building a community with strong social services, remarkable cultural excellence, and great civic pride. To accomplish this, Huntsville women have had to exercise the same skills top players in business, politics, and the professions exercise, from complicated financial management to savvy marketing strategies to the fine art of the deal. I have a feeling that many of Huntsville's riches owe their existence to the cleverness and determination of talented women on a mission.

### HUNTSVILLE'S SPECIAL TREASURES AND PLEASURES: THE PRESERVATION IMPERATIVE

*The farmer's market ... dog-trot barns ... pansies ... Monte Sano ... Fort Book ... Gazebo Concerts ... luminaries ... UAH and A&M ... vistas and views ... Big Spring Park ... architecture ... music, art, theater ... the railroad depot ... diversity ... museums ... WLRH ... the Botanical Garden ... community spirit!*

In less than a year, I have come to appreciate Huntsville for its natural beauty, diverse architectural treasures, rich cultural climate, and unique community spirit. The city's cultural climate and community spirit weave together, blending Old Huntsville's values of preservation and continuity with New Huntsville's influences of diversity and cosmopolitanism. The result is a rich tapestry of talent and civic pride that includes musicians, actors, artists, and dancers; interest groups (for quilters or calligraphers, fern growers or herb fanciers, folk dancers or embroiderers, sacred harp singers or dulcimer devotees, toastmasters or table tennis players); societies (of Sons of the American Revolution, women engineers, Iwo Jima veterans, government accountants, amateur and professional historians and preservationists, literature lovers, and jazz and poetry buffs); volunteers (over 350 just at the Adult Learning Center); and a host of cultural and civic benefactors. Corporate sponsorship and support of community projects is especially strong.

It is the continuing vitality of Huntsville's community spirit on which we must depend for the protection of the city's physical and architectural riches. Our natural treasures are obvious: mountains, breathtaking vistas, a spring-fed lake in the middle of town, native flora, fertile fields, waterways. Some of these blessings have been transformed by human creativity into parks and gardens, such as the delightful botanical garden. Preserving them in the face of growth is challenging. Residential development on the mountains, pressures to build near Big Spring Park, the tendency to throw up new buildings instead of recycling older structures, the constant threat of encroachment from the automobile's appetite for land all warrant vigilance. Over the last 10 years, I and other Delawareans witnessed a highly touted business boom destroy thousands of acres of beautiful forests and irreplaceable farm land, along with their ecosystems. These precious resources gave way to tract housing, shoddy strip malls, and highways that somehow never eased the nightmarish traffic jams brought about by the much vaunted "economic growth."

It is not only nature's gifts that want safeguarding. Buildings need protection, too. The third courthouse, the Carnegie Library, the post office at Eustis and Green, which was demolished to make way for a parking lot, are accessible now only in photograph or watercolor. And only the Lowe cotton mill building (now a warehouse) remains for possible use as a museum about an important part of Huntsville's history. Of course, many communities have suffered worse depredations. The 1960's and '70's zeal for "progress" set the wrecking ball to ravaging American cities with the determination of the grim reaper at his scythe. Huntsville has done much better than many cities in preserving its architectural heritage and in maintaining a viable downtown in the face of the growing attraction of suburbs and malls.

Threats are ever present, however. Something as intangible as a view that gives a special feel to a place can be at risk. The city of Portland, Oregon has judged views of

Mount Hood to be so precious that the city has enacted strict municipal regulations to protect "view corridors." (The Atlantic, November 1992) San Francisco has removed part of an expressway that destroyed a view of its waterfront. In Huntsville, Big Spring Park is a vital focal point for the city. The view of the area as the eye sweeps around the lake I hope remains unspoiled by high-rises in the inner ring of the park, or new parking garages, or by any construction on its open spaces.

The automobile poses the biggest and most constant threat to land, buildings, and quality of air and life, especially during periods of economic growth. Cars devour land for roads (even in the case of elevated expressways, miles and miles of land underneath the concrete are cast in permanent shadow and rendered useless for anything except attracting windblown trash) and for parking (meaning buildings like the old post office are threatened with demolition for parking lots and garages). Across the country, many civic groups have battled with highway enthusiasts who wanted expressways in areas that would have been forever altered by their construction. Can you imagine New Orleans's Vieux Carrè with an elevated expressway running through and over it? That was a serious proposal years ago (perhaps conceived by the same city planners who thought replacing streetcars with buses was a good idea). In the PBS series *Eyes on the Prize*, residents of Overtown, Florida who spoke about underlying causes of riots in that city claimed that their formerly vital community of 20,000 people was ruined when an interstate highway came through, taking away the homes of half the population. According to a prominent Delaware historian, downtown Wilmington began to decline when I-95 was built, breaking up neighborhoods and destroying a sense of community.

Huntsville has the new 565 interstate spur, and it is a wonderful, convenient road. Long-time residents can judge better what the new road's impact has been with the demolition of sections of the mill villages and the incursion into residential neighborhoods. Life is understandably

easier, but I hope that the city will take care that future highway development does not destroy what has been so painstakingly preserved for generations to come. I've met many people who have moved to Huntsville from communities all over the country. Like me, they've caught the contagious spirit of pride that animates their new city. Like me, many of them have seen what happened elsewhere when the delicate interplay of progress and preservation was disrupted.

### POSTSCRIPT: WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

Still missing from this newcomer's kaleidoscope are images of black Americans' contributions to Huntsville's history. Possibly I haven't looked yet in the right places to fill in the gaps in my knowledge of black history in Huntsville and Madison County. My first visits to Huntsville's historic sites yielded little mention of the presence of black Americans in Huntsville's history and no mention of their contributions. Not at the depot, where facts about men and women occupying separate waiting rooms years ago were part of the tour material for the general public, but nothing was said about the much more significant (and recent) separation by race. Not, either, at some of the historic buildings I've visited, where no reference was made to the sweat and skills that black laborers and artisans must have contributed to these fine structures.

I'm looking forward to learning more about prominent black citizens in Huntsville's history, as well as about the life of black people here during the mill era and the civil rights years. Without reflections of all the story's participants, my impressions will be a collection of unfocused fragments, not a clear, complete picture.

## A PHOTO TOUR



There's an architectural style for everyone in Huntsville. Spanish-style house on Walker Street.

BELOW: What IS this place??





Mill Village church ca. 1907 on Humes Avenue lives on as an antique store. Store owners stripped and preserved original exterior and interior. Roof was repainted. Shutters are new but reproduce originals.



In a splendid reincarnation, stately columns from demolished courthouse grace the botanical garden's entranceway.



Goodbye to all that: smokestack of old Merrimack Mill shortly before it was demolished.

“... bare ruin'd choirs ...”  
All that remains of Monte Sano tavern. Sometimes leaving ruins alone is the best way to preserve the past.



Not the Elgin Marbles, but column pieces from third courthouse are worth preserving — maybe just like this.

Ruins of an old dairy spring house in northeast Huntsville.

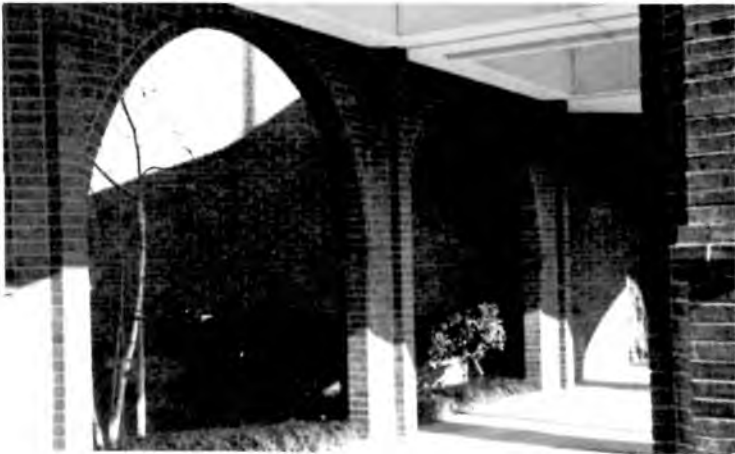




The library: looks impregnable but all it takes to breach this stronghold and plunder its treasure is a little white membership card.



BELOW: A friendly arched ambulatory softens the library's fortress-like features.



HUNTSVILLE  
 APOSTOLIC OVERCOMING HOLY  
 CHURCH OF GOD

Sunday School	9:30
Worship Service*	11:00
Sunday Night	7:00

3110 Bob Wallace Drive

Pastor. Kelvin Davis

Bishop. Jasper Roby

Some of Huntsville's churches:  
 wonderful names and mysterious  
 theologies to a Yankee Catholic.



TRUTH INDEPENDENT  
 BAPTIST CHURCH

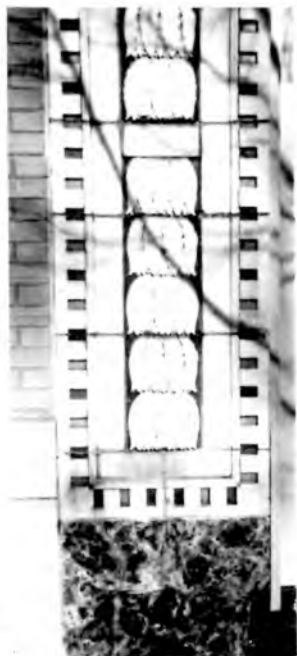
LORDS DAY		<b>SERVICES</b>	WEDNESDAY
BIBLE STUDY	10 AM	PASTOR	BIBLE STUDY 7 PM
WORSHIP HOUR	11 AM	<i>C.E. Hammond</i>	Phone 883-8679
EVENING WORSHIP	6 PM		533-6897

VICTORY EVANGELISTIC  
 PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

WED. 7:30 p.m. Prayer/Bible Study  
 FRI. 7:30 p.m. Evangelistic Service  
 SAT. 11:00 a.m. Ministries of Teaching



Miscellaneous magic from Huntsville's architecture: stained glass windows, and details from downtown buildings.



RIGHT: Can you still see men in greatcoats and ladies in crinolines alighting from hansom cabs n Twickenham and Old Town? Numerous carriage blocks dot neighborhood streets.





**No preservationist feelings for this.  
Do parking garages ever get torn down in the name of progress?**



**PHOTOMONTAGE— ABOVE and NEXT PAGE:**

**The automobile, marvelous servant, also consumes land,  
fouls the air, and breeds ugliness.**

# JAKE'S AUTO CLEAN - UP

VANCE MORRIS  
MOTOR CO. &  
BODY SHOP

MR.



TRANSMISSION

## Village Car Wash

COOK'S  
TRUCK  
CENTER INC.

HEAVY DUTY  
TRUCK & TRAILER  
PARTS

ACTION  MAKES DAILY CHECKS  
AUTO ELECTRIC  
SERVICE

ALTERNATORS/STARTERS/GENERATORS

ALL PRO  
AUTOMOTIVE  
FOREIGN & DOMESTIC  
551-0701

SKIP'S AUTO  
REPAIR  
AUTO AC  
SERVICE

*Auto  
Wash*

PAUL'S  
AUTO PARTS,  
INC.

NANCE  
TRANSMISSION  
SERVICE





**Poignant commentaries: Pedro, a chihuahua buried in Maple Hill Centery, was accorded a name on a headstone; slaves often were not.**

## MEET OUR NEW NEIGHBORS

Diane Ellis was born in Chicago and lived in Illinois and Michigan before moving with her family to Stamford, Connecticut, where her parents still live. She earned a B.A. degree from Marquette University and completed all course work for an M.A. in English at Tulane University. She and her husband, Jack, lived for 25 years in Newark, Delaware before moving to Huntsville in July 1992, when Jack became Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at UAH. Diane has taught literature and composition, worked in corporate communications and public relations, and acted as the University of Delaware's "quality control" for graduate theses and dissertations. Currently, she is a volunteer with TASC and a volunteer at the Adult Learning Center, where she teaches essay writing to students preparing for the GED exam.

Jack Ellis was born in Oklahoma and grew up there and in East Texas. He graduated from Baylor University with a B.A. and earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in history from Tulane University. After graduating from Tulane, he joined the faculty of the University of Delaware and spent 25 years there, four and a half of them as chair of the history department. In July 1992, he accepted the position of Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at UAH. His most recent book is **The Physician-legislators of France: Medicine and politics in the early Third Republic, 1870-1914**, published in 1990 by Cambridge University Press.

## **OUR IMPRESSIONS AND MEMORIES OF MADISON COUNTY**

Contributions by:  
5th grade students in Madison County  
September 6, 1991  
Liberty Middle School

**H**eat of Dixie  
**U**tility  
**N**ice Schools  
**T**ornadoes  
**S**pace & Rocket Center  
**V**on Brown Civic Center  
**I**nteresting  
**L**ibrary  
**L**iberty Middle School  
**E**xciting

*Bryan Lizardo*

**H**untsville is fun  
**U**nforgettable  
**N**ot big or small  
**T**errific  
**S**tupendous  
**V**ery historical  
**I**nventive  
**L**ive action  
**L**et it be the one  
**E**ven the best

*Gloria Lamar*



## **Madison: A Great Place to Live**

**M** is magnificent scenery

**A** is amazing schools

**D** is delightful climate

**I** is inventive minds

**S** is southern hospitality

**O** is organized sports

**N** is national pride

*Ian Harvey*

**M**arvelous

**A**ctive all the time

**D**ependable

**I**ndustrious

**S** is southern hospitality

**O** is organized sports

**N** is national pride

**C**aring

**O**pen hearted

**U**nderstanding people

**N**ASA

**T**he Best Place to Live

**Y**ours and mine

*Leslie Atnip*

## **Madison County**

Madison County is rarely heard about but it has some really great things! Madison County was the first in some areas like the first water system in Huntsville. Madison county also has many different places, like flat cotton fields, Monte Sano State Park, and small streams and creeks that feed into the mighty Tennessee River. For looking into the past, you only have to go to Constitution Hall Park. And to see a glimpse of the present or the future, visit the Space and Rocket Center. So even though Madison County is not the most famous place, it still means a lot to those of us that live here.

*Allison Case*

Hi, my name is Scott Santoro. One of my memories of Huntsville is of The Space and Rocket Center. One ride, The Simulator, made me sick, but I liked it! Another memory is of the Train Depot, it's cool! They have a gift shop and a museum. There's even a trolley that takes you around Huntsville. The trolley even takes you to an ice cream parlor. I saved the best for last, The Street Fair! It happens every year, in September. I get to see all my friends there and you can play games and win prizes. All and all, I have a lot of memories of Huntsville.

*Scott Santoro*

## **The Reason I Like North Alabama**

The reason I like North Alabama is because there are a lot of fun things to do. There is Panoply, that is one of my favorite things. Then there is the Space and Rocket Center. And Constitution Hall, the Civic Center, and the Parade at Christmas.

I also like it because my family is here. My grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

*Chase Kenegan*

Once there was a mother of twins parade. I got to ride on the float and wave to people while they waved back. All my friends were there, even my teacher. My brother saw his friends and everybody else. It seemed like everyone in Huntsville and Madison County was there. My mom and dad were taking pictures of everything and everyone. It was windy and balloons were flying in the sky. The sky was nice and clear, not a cloud in the sky.

*Kylie Jordan*

I moved to Madison County when I was 12 months old. I have lived in Madison all my life. I enjoy the Street Fairs we have every year. My family does many things at the Street Fair. We buy many things there and play lots of games. My family also enjoys going to Panoply. We all enjoy looking at the beautiful artwork and making our own artwork on the sidewalks. Everyone in my family enjoys living in Madison County, especially me!!

*Allison Whitworth*