

7-1-1998

Society Wins Award from Historic Huntsville Foundation for Work in Erecting Historical Markers

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Recommended Citation

Luttrell, Alex III (1998) "Society Wins Award from Historic Huntsville Foundation for Work in Erecting Historical Markers," *Huntsville Historical Review*. Vol. 25: No. 2, Article 4.

Available at: <https://louis.uah.edu/huntsville-historical-review/vol25/iss2/4>

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**SOCIETY WINS AWARD FROM HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
Luttrell: Society Wins Award from Historic Huntsville Foundation for Work i
FOUNDATION FOR WORK IN ERECTING HISTORICAL MARKERS**

by

F. Alex Luttrell, III

The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society recently received an award from the Historic Huntsville Foundation in recognition of "outstanding accomplishment in the preservation and protection of Huntsville and Madison County's distinctive architectural heritage." Mrs. Joyce Smith accepted the Historic Preservation Award at a banquet on May 21, 1998. The Society was honored for educating the public through the erection of Alabama Historical Association-sponsored historical highway markers. Six new markers have been installed in Madison County since the beginning of the year. Five of these markers were erected within the corporate limits of Huntsville and the sixth was installed in Meridianville. The erection and dedication of these markers is the culmination of nearly a year's effort by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society Marker Committee. In some cases, sponsoring organizations and individuals have been working on the projects even longer, researching records, interviewing historians, and gathering enough historical data to present their cases to the marker committee.

During the summer of 1997, the marker committee selected four sites to be added to the list of Alabama Historical Association-sponsored markers. These included the LeRoy Pope Mansion, the Temple B'nai Sholom, Historic Viduta/Hotel Monte Sano, and the original site of Lakeside United Methodist Church. The City of Huntsville, through its FY97 appropriation, agreed to finance the purchase and installation of these four markers. A fifth marker, noting the site of the Monte Sano Female Seminary, was found stored in a city garage and added to those new markers being erected and dedicated. The sixth marker was proposed, sponsored, and financed by the First Baptist Church of Huntsville, and placed at the original site of their church, formerly known as Enon Baptist Church.

Text for each of these markers was thoroughly reviewed, edited, and finally approved by both the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society Marker Committee and the Alabama Historical Association Marker Committee. The markers were then ordered from the manufacturer and shipped to Huntsville. The LeRoy Pope Mansion and the Temple B'nai Sholom markers have been erected, but not yet dedicated. The other four markers were officially unveiled and dedicated during ceremonies occurring over the past few months.

Two of the markers were unveiled in back-to-back ceremonies atop Monte Sano on Sunday, April 19, 1998. Crowds assembled at 2:00 pm at the intersection of Monte Sano Boulevard and Nolen Avenue to view the new historical marker commemorating the existence of Historic Viduta and the Hotel Monte Sano. Following the invocation by Rev. Ira Laney of the Monte Sano

United Methodist Church, Mrs. Jane Barr, President of the Monte Sano Historical Association, presided over the event. She welcomed everyone to the occasion and introduced the special guests before calling on Mr. Walter Terry to give a short history of the area. Mr. John Allen, Vice-President of the Monte Sano Historical Association, then unveiled the marker and presented it to Mr. Alex Luttrell, representing the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, and Mr. Jim Lee, representing the Alabama Historical Association. Each accepted the marker on behalf of his organization and then yielded the floor back to Mr. Allen for some closing remarks. Rev. Laney pronounced the benediction and the crowd was then entertained with recorded music from the era of the Hotel Monte Sano.



Mr. John Allen unveils the Historic Viduta/Hotel Monte Sano marker.

The attendees quickly reassembled several blocks away at the former location of the Monte Sano Female Seminary. Here they were joined by over fifty descendants of Rev. and Mrs. James Rowe, founders of the seminary. Rev. Laney again opened the ceremony with an invocation and Mrs. Barr introduced

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Huntsville City Councilman Mark Hall and some of the many Rowe descendants
in attendance. Mr. Terry spoke briefly on the history of the seminary, and then
Mrs. Mildred Rowe Sanders was given the honor of unveiling the marker. Mr.
Allen, Mr. Luttrell, and Mr. Lee again performed their same roles in the
presentation and acceptance of this marker which was originally erected and
dedicated in 1957. Rev. Laney closed the ceremony with a benediction.
Following the two dedication ceremonies, Tom and Jane Barr hosted a reception
at their home on Monte Sano. Mrs. Barr had converted their home into a small
museum for the occasion. Items relating to the history of Monte Sano were
prominently displayed throughout the home and enjoyed by all attendees.



Mrs. Jane Barr and Mrs. Mildred Rowe Sanders pose in front of the recently re-erected Monte Sano Female Seminary marker

The History Committee of the First Baptist Church of Huntsville invited their congregation to witness the unveiling of a marker to commemorate the original site of the Enon Baptist Church. This occasion took place at 10:00 am on the very cool morning of June 6, 1998. Dr. Ralph Langley, Paster Emeritus, commenced the ceremony with an invocation. Mr. Bob Alverson, Chairman of the First Baptist Church History Committee, welcomed all guests which included church members, members of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, Dr. Doss from the Cumberland School of Law at Samford University, and Madison County Commissioner Harold Harbin. Commissioner Harbin was responsible for preparing the site and erecting the marker at the intersection of Meridianville Bottom Road and Bolling Road in Meridianville. A history of the church, written by Mrs. Mildred Bobo, was presented by Mrs. Polly Lucas. Mr. David Hinkle and Mr. Bob Quick were then given the honor of unveiling the marker; these two men were instrumental in locating the site of the original church. Mr. Steve Lee, Chairman of the First Baptist Church Trustees, presented the marker to Mr. Alex Luttrell and Mr. Jim Lee, representing the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society and the Alabama Historical Association, respectively. Dr. Tim Brock, Minister of Education and Adults, spoke briefly on the church's interesting history, as well as, its exciting future. Finally, Mrs. Catherine Miller, Pastoral Assistant and longtime member, concluded the ceremony with a few words and a prayer.



Members of the First Baptist Church History Committee and others instrumental in working on the marker pose in front of the finished product.

In addition to the six previously mentioned markers, others are in various stages of the review, approval, and installation process. After many months of review and discussion, the texts for the Shiloh United Methodist Church marker, the Goldsmith-Schiffman Field marker, and the Huntsville Slave Cemetery marker were approved by the local committee and the Alabama Historical Association Marker Committee, and the markers were ordered from the manufacturer. Marker committee members and other individuals are also performing the required research and writing the text for a marker to commemorate the site of Tallulah Bankhead's Birthplace in the I. Schiffman Building. Official unveiling and dedication ceremonies will be scheduled for each of these markers as soon as they arrive and can be erected. The committee is also currently working with the Huntsville City Council and the Madison County Commission to secure funding for erecting additional markers. Once funds are committed the committee will review the list of proposed markers, and select those to work on during 1999. The texts of the markers dedicated during the summer of 1998 are shown below.

HISTORIC VIDUTA

"Viduta" - derived from Spanish "vida" meaning "life"

In a time when yellow fever, malaria, and cholera threatened, Dr. Thomas Fearn and his brothers Robert and George were drawn by the cool air and medicinal springs to establish a small colony on the northern section of Monte Sano Mountain in 1827. In 1833 the town of Viduta was officially established. The area contains a variety of architectural styles, dating from the late 1800's. Approximate boundaries: Lookout Drive (N); Denison Avenue (S); Monte Sano Boulevard (W); and Shelby Avenue (E). Listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage, March 8, 1994.

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HOTEL MONTE SANO

"Monte Sano" - Spanish for "Mountain of Health"

In 1887 the North Alabama Improvement Company, with the assistance of Michael and James O'Shaughnessy, built a 233-room hotel on Monte Sano Mountain. The hotel served as a health resort and haven for industrial giants including the Vanderbilts and Astors. Guests arrived via the Monte Sano Railway which ran up the mountain. The hotel ceased operations in 1900 and was later purchased by the Garth family for their summer residence. It was demolished for salvage in 1944. All that remains of the hotel is the brick chimney on Old Chimney Road.

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Monte Sano Female Seminary
founded by
The Rev. and Mrs. James Rowe
opened February, 1830
closed December, 1833

Course of Instruction included "English,
Classical, Scientific, and Ornamental
branches of Education usually bestowed upon
young ladies in such institutions."

The Rev. James Rowe was minister,
Huntsville Station,
Methodist Church
1827 & 1829

THIS MARKER SPONSORED BY W.P. DILWORTH, SR. 1957

ORIGINAL SITE OF ENON BAPTISTCHURCH

Approximately one-half mile north of here is the original site of the oldest Baptist Church (Missionary) in Alabama. This congregation was organized on June 3, 1809 as the West Fork of Flint River Church and renamed Enon Church shortly thereafter. John Canterbury was called as the first pastor on August 5, 1809. This group became a charter member of Flint River Baptist Association in 1814. Services were held in members' homes until a log meetinghouse was completed in 1813. This building served until 1825 when a brick church was constructed three miles northeast of Meridianville. In 1861 under the leadership of Pastor Eugene Strode, the congregation moved to Huntsville. The Enon Baptist Church was renamed First Baptist Church in 1895.

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ORIGINAL SITE OF
LAKESIDE UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
1866-1968

The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church purchased this property in 1866, and the congregation erected a frame building with a brick basement in 1867. The Rev. Howell Echols was the first pastor. In 1886, a brick building, constructed from dismantled materials from the original Episcopal Church of the Nativity, was dedicated. The property was sold during Urban Renewal in the 1960's, and the congregation moved to 3738 Meridian Street in 1968. The building on this site was destroyed by fire, and many items, including church records, stained glass windows, cornerstones, and a chandelier, were lost.

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ORIGINAL SITE OF
LAKESIDE UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
1866-1968

For more than a century at this site, Lakeside provided educational, political, and cultural leaders for Huntsville. The first city-supported school for blacks was located in the basement (1867-1890), with Henry C. Binford, Charles Hendley, Jr., and Thomas Cooper as principals. Six of the nine black Aldermen in Huntsville from 1880-1905 were members of the church: Thomas Townsend, Nelson Hendley, David and Daniel Brandon, Dr. Burgess E. Scruggs, and Henry C. Binford. Mary Binford Jordan began the Annual Harvest Cultural Festival in 1901 in the basement and the first public library for blacks was opened there in 1940 by Dulcina DeBerry.

ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION 1997