

From the President Happy birthday, Alabama!

After literally years of build-up, the Bicentennial is here! The last two years have marked a non-stop celebration of Alabama's history – her people, her places, her stories – as they've never been celebrated before, and now the actual 200th anniversary of Alabama's statehood is upon us.

Which raises the important question – so, now what?

You don't have to answer today. Celebrate first. Stop, breathe, recover second. But then it's time to stop looking backward and begin to look forward. Or, since we're still talking history, it's time to look forward to future looking backward.

During my tenure as Historical Society president, I have tried to keep two dates in my head in everything I do – 1819 and 2055.

1819, of course, is the thing we just celebrated, the creation of the State of Alabama 200 years ago. The Bicentennial has very heavily colored my tenure as HMCHS president for the last two years.

2055 is the next time we do this. The next occasion for which this community will see this level of celebration of history will be the 250th anniversary of the settling of Huntsville in 1805.

And when I say the next time "we" will do this, I don't mean us. By the time of that anniversary 36 years from now, the duty of planning and executing that celebration will fall to others.

Our duty, then, is the here and now. Our duty is the things that must be done today, and tomorrow, to equip those who will carry that torch onward.

Our duty is stewardship.

We have inherited our history from those who preserved it before us, and owe an obligation to preserve it for those who come after us.

The volume in your hands is one way we do that. The Society itself is another.

As I conclude my tenure as president, I encourage and challenge you to continue to celebrate our history, but to celebrate the past with an eye toward the future.

Best regards,

David Hitt

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