

# **THE HUNTSVILLE HISTORICAL REVIEW**

**Winter-Spring 1994**

Volume 21

No. 1

**PUBLISHED BY**

**The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society**

OFFICERS  
of the  
HUNTSVILLE-MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1993-94

PRESIDENT  
James W. Lee

|                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Vice President-Programs.....   | John Rison Jones, Jr. |
| Vice President-Membership..... | Leatrice Cole         |
| Recording Secretary.....       | Jeanne Henry          |
| Corresponding Secretary.....   | Nan Hall              |
| Treasurer.....                 | John Shaver           |

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Margaret Henson  
Harvie Jones  
Frank Alex Luttrell III

Nancy Rohr  
Jeanne S. Smith  
Winston Walker III

Ex-Officio Directors  
(past presidents who are still active)

Sarah Fiske  
Brandon Jones  
Dorothy Prince Luke  
James Record

Frances Roberts  
Joyce Smith  
Alice Thomas

EDITOR  
Frances C. Roberts

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Nan G. Hall  
Dorothy Scott Johnson

John Rison Jones  
Alice Thomas

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| RE-ACTIVATION OF HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM  | 1    |
| REMEMBERING COUNCILL SCHOOL<br>by Henry C. Lacey, Ph.D  | 3    |
| HISTORY OF WILLIAM HOOPER COUNCILL HIGH SCHOOL<br>(1867-1970)<br>Compiled by Marguerite Lacey and Perry O. Ward | 9    |
| COMMENTS ON THE EXPANSION OF HISTORY<br>by Johanna Nichol Shields, Ph.D   | 14   |
| ACADEMY STUDENTS UNRAVELING MYSTERIES OF<br>BLACK CEMETERY<br>by Phillip Taylor                                 | 15   |



## RE-ACTIVATION OF HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

The Huntsville Madison County Historical Society has recently renewed its efforts on behalf of the Alabama Historical Association marker program which was instituted in 1951 to insure that historical places of importance were appropriately marked. Between 1953 and 1987, 37 state markers were erected throughout Madison County under the supervision of the local historical society with the aid of the Madison County Commission under the leadership of James Record. In recent years, the local historical society has assisted in erecting five markers—one at Ditto's Landing, two at New Market, one at Gurley, and one in the City of Madison—with the financial help of district county commissioners.

In 1993 the Alumni Association of William Hooper Councill High School requested that a state historic marker be placed on the campus of the school on St. Clair Street. A committee consisting of members of the last graduating class of 1966 requested the help of the society in wording the marker and planning a dedication ceremony. Included in this group were Catherine Madry Stewart and Shirley Fitchard Bush, co-chairs, and Andrew Brown, Richard H. Bush, Jr., Willie M. Clark, Earline Bellmon Ford, Earnest Horton, Adam Kellam, George Kelly, Willie B. Pope, Virginia Sledge Rice, Mamie Pendleton Ward, and Perry O. Ward.

In addition to the Alumni Association, the City of Huntsville, the Madison County Commission, and the Huntsville Madison County Historical Society contributed to the purchase of the marker. By city ordinance, sponsored by William Showers and James Wall, \$12,000 was appropriated to place six historic markers, one of which was the Councill High School marker.

The dedication of this marker took place on Sunday, March 27, 1994, at 3:00 p.m. at the Huntsville Madison County Library which occupies the site of the William Hooper Councill High School football field. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Henry C. Lacey who is Academic Vice President of Dillard University in New Orleans. The text of his address is included in this issue.

Presentation of the marker to the Alabama Historical Association was made by Earnest Horton and formally accepted by James Lee, President of the Huntsville–Madison County Historical Society, and Winston W. Walker III, chairman of the local marker committee, and a member of the board of the Alabama Historical Association.

Besides the placement of new historic markers, the Huntsville–Madison County Historical Society marker committee is surveying and compiling a list of all historic markers in Madison County for publication. So far the committee has documented 44 markers which are presently standing within the confines of

Huntsville and Madison County. These, along with two markers to be repaired, one on order, and four presently in the planning stages, will be included in the proposed historic marker publication. This will allow all those interested in local history to have a ready reference at their finger tips.



Historic Marker Dedicated March 27, 1927  
*(Photograph by Dessa Brown)*

## REMEMBERING COUNCILL SCHOOL

Henry C. Lacey, Ph.D.

Class of 1961

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am indeed flattered and humbled on being asked to speak before this group.

First, I am flattered to think that the members of the alumni association thought enough of me to ask me to come before you on such a momentous occasion, a sacred occasion. I consider it sacred because it gives us pause to consider the importance of this institution, the William Hooper Councill School, in our lives; to rededicate ourselves to the principles for which it stood; and to commit ourselves to guaranteeing continuity of those principles. It is truly exhilarating to stand here as the keynoter at this commemoration. Thirty-three years have passed since my graduation from Councill High School, and I am having some real difficulty in realizing that and in accepting the idea that you asked me, of all the grads you could have asked, to speak today. I feel a genuine humility when I think of the many great sons and daughters of Councill who have achieved great things, particularly those who served the institution itself with consummate commitment and professionalism through the years. I see some of you today.

Just trying to prepare for this occasion has been overwhelming. The names and faces that came back to me were those of people many of you recall, people who meant as much to you and your personal development as they meant to me and mine, and I find myself wondering what would Mr. Fields say about my being here today. Mr. Comer, Mrs. Swoopes, Mrs. Fearn, Coach Davis, Miss Allen? As I thought about these and others, I hoped that they would be pleased in that they (and many others) are, in large part, for better or worse, responsible for whatever accomplishments I have made. For the vital roles they played in my life, I am deeply thankful.

I am even more thankful to be able to look upon the faces of other heroes and heroines, my former teachers, who are with us today. They know who they are. I'll say more about a few of them momentarily. But let me say here also that I most happy that the most important teacher in my life is here with us. I speak, of course, of my mother, Mrs. Marguerite Dobbins Lacey, who also was a teacher at Councill in the elementary division--thank God a few years after I got out of that division. On a final note of greetings, I am also delighted to see a number of relatives and special friends and classmates.

Memories! The memories that flood my mind today are overwhelming. I hope you will bear with me as I reminisce. You know, when one has made the same trek every school day of his formative years, it is bound to leave fairly strong impressions. For 12 years of my life, 9 months out of the year, I walked from

307 Lowe Street to Pelham Street, to Councill School. I recall it as if it were yesterday, walking down Lowe Street, being joined by my neighborhood pals, Pap Rice, the Davis boys, Earl Pope, rounding the corner at Tuminello's, crossing the bridge, reaching the corner of Pump and Pelham (at Dennis's store) and being joined there by all the guys and girls from the Courts and far east side of town. Not only do I recall vividly the daily walks and our convergence at this holy place; I also remember many late night walks, following our return from away football games. Sometimes those brief walks were exhilarating, as when we had vanquished a conference rival for the conference championship. On other occasions, this brief three-block walk could seem like miles, as on those occasions when we had returned from Chattanooga and Howard High School. (I'll say more on this later.)

It is simply impossible to explain to people just what 12 years of attendance at one school can do to and for a person. My children went to four different preparatory schools. There is simply no way that they can understand the sense of community, the sense of family engendered by our experiences at Councill. This school was truly an extension of my home. My teachers were additional parents. They cared, and they proved themselves role models in every way. My fellow students were my brothers and sisters. There was truly something special about the William Hooper Councill High School. And this was reflected in the great school spirit we shared. "School Spirit." This is a phrase one hardly hears these days. It's considered outmoded, corny, I guess, but we had an abundance of it. Why did we feel this way?

Much of the reason is, of course, as I noted earlier, in the quality of the teachers we had. I know the danger of naming particular individuals, but on an occasion such as this, I simply don't know any other way. Please bear with me as I recall every one of them, beginning with the first grade: Mrs. Fannie Lowe, Mrs. Virginia Moore, Mrs. Ethel Richards, Mrs. Ella Kendricks, Miss Rosa Allen, Miss Marie True, Mr. Charles Brandon, Mr. Isaac Rooks, Mrs. Frances Swoopes, Mr. Henry Comer, Mrs. Dorothy Turner, Mrs. Susie Gandy, Mr. Jerry Davis, Mr. Willie Clark, Miss Ernestine Street, Mrs. Theresa DeShields, Mrs. Roper, Mrs. Thompson, and, of course, Mr. Kellam and Mr. Hill, our coach and our band director. Each of these persons contributed mightily to my academic and personal growth and to the full development of all the young people under their tutelage.

If I had time, I could tell you stories about each one of them, stories which would define them as individuals and teachers. They were all totally committed and conscientious in their daily preparations and high expectations of us, and, "Separate but Equal" notwithstanding, they taught us to think ourselves as good as anybody, intellectually and otherwise. Respect was given, and respect was expected in return. We had teachers who were as concerned with teaching us lessons in proper living as they were in teaching their subject

matter. The importance of this comes home to me so dramatically today as I hear the stories of my wife, an itinerant art teacher in New Orleans, who comes home every day with some horror story of what a second, third, fourth, or eleventh grader did or said. The sad thing is that these things are said and done in the presence of teachers, counselors and principals, who do nothing to curb the undesirable behavior. Perhaps their recalcitrance is born of fear. Perhaps it is an index of their having simply given up. Whatever, it is a tragic commentary, and there is little wonder that we have the problems that we do today. Men and women of character, our teachers, insisted that we develop into the same.

It was a part of the natural order for me to see in church on Sunday the same individuals who taught me Monday through Friday, and I might add that they were not simply there. They were totally involved, taking leadership roles in the church and in other significant community groups. Hence, they imbued us also with a sense of the importance of service, the idea that we were duty-bound to give something back. All of this served to give us a tremendous sense of communal bonds, all connected through the nucleus of the school.

About the teaching ability of these individuals--they were master teachers, knowledgeable, rigorous, and creative. I was fortunate enough to learn the importance of developing my expressive abilities at the feet of such greats as Mrs. Turner who insisted that we not only hone our writing skills but our speaking skills as well. She insisted that we read widely (and had no problems with my reading books such as Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* in the 1950s--do you realize how revolutionary that was?). She also undoubtedly was one of the motivating forces in instituting the senior year speech requirement, mandated of all graduating seniors. For all these things, I am immensely thankful.

I mentioned the creativity of the teachers we knew at Council. This was, of course, a must under "Separate but Equal." As we all know, there was never any equality under that system. Thinking back on these early days, I can recall the time prior to the construction of the "new" building, i.e. a time before we had a gymnasium, science laboratories, a cafeteria. I guess I had almost blocked out such memories, but in trying to reach back as far as I could, I retrieved memories of varsity basketball games played outside, on red clay. By the time I reached junior high school, with the completion of the "new" building, facilities were better. Still a far cry from those at the city's other two high schools. Nevertheless, what we lacked in equipment and facilities was more than offset by the aforementioned creativity and commitment of our teachers. I am sure that there has never been a more creative teacher of high school science courses than Henry Comer. Mr. Comer could excite anybody, even our most committed class clowns and bad actors, about the wonders of science. It is nothing short of miraculous that my small graduating class of 50 or so students produced three medical doctors. It is because we had such

persons as Mr. Comer, who didn't give his students time to think they were deprived, underprivileged, and ill-equipped.

When I think of Council, I think also of how we were urged to become Renaissance men and women. Well before the Army took up the theme of "Be all that you can be," we were given that mandate in so many ways. We were taught to value scholastic achievement, outstanding artistic performance, and surpassing athletic accomplishment. Because of the relative smallness of our school, it was, indeed, essential to have a bunch of multi-talented individuals. There was never any conflict in one's trying to be an "A" student, a good musician (choir or band), and a good football, baseball, or basketball player. Amazingly, some people did it all. We were fortunate in having models who showed us that this was possible. I speak of a person such as Isaac Rooks, masterful teacher of the social sciences, a jazz saxophonist, singer, and track coach. He was John Hope Franklin, Charlie Parker, Billy Eckstein, and Jesse Owens rolled into one (and we all wished we could make our collars roll in that great Mr. "B" style, just like his).

As I stated, we were taught to appreciate excellence no matter the form. Whether we were singing *The Hallelujah Chorus* under the baton of Mrs. Gandy or playing a 12-bar blues such as *The Hucklebuck* (we didn't realize the more sophisticated title was *Now's the Time*) with Mr. Hill or Mr. Rooks, it had to be done well, with style and grace. The same for the many spirituals done by the choirs (both the junior and senior choir). As I look back, I realize the role played by our musical groups in helping us to develop a healthy respect for the beauty of African American culture as well as music from the European or so-called classical tradition. We were made to understand that we were heirs to it all, that it was all ours and, moreover, that it all had merit. Hence, Mr. Hill encouraged us as we formed a band, playing rhythm and blues and later jazz. He taught us to play the works of Mendelsohn, Mozart, and Wagner during the day and drove us to R & B gigs at night. For all this, I am thankful. Such experiences were invaluable in thoroughly humanizing me and my peers.

Likewise with athletics, and I think I can claim some real authority and privilege here. After all, Coach Kellam has said that I played for him longer than any of his players. It's true, but there is a catch to it. You see, I only played three years as a true varsity player--grades 10, 11 and 12. However, some of you oldtimers might remember me as team mascot from first grade through about fourth. Through the ingenuity of my big brother, George, I was recommended to Coach Kellam for that august responsibility and wore the number "0" my first year, the number "1/2" the next year, and from then on number "1." In about fourth grade, everybody agreed I was getting pretty big for the job, in fact bigger than some of the varsity players. So, I retired until, as I said 10th grade. I was one of Coach Kellam's "birds" for a long time, and I learned some great lessons over those seven years. I learned about hard work,

sacrifice, thorough preparation, teamwork, and perhaps most important of all, the value of setting high goals. Well before I read Robert Browning or heard of Benjamin Mays, Coach Kellam was indoctrinating us with their message. Browning's "Ah but a man's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a heaven for?" and Mays's "Not failure but low aim is sin." In scheduling people such as Howard High School, Parker High, and Cobb Avenue High, he passed on to us an understanding of these words. I must admit that as I, at 180 pounds, lined up across from a 300-pound Howard High School tackle, I often wished that Coach had had us aim a bit lower. Nevertheless, we always played them well, finally losing out to their size and depth. But as I said, great lessons were learned here. Those larger schools left those contests with a healthy respect for us and we left knowing that we could compete with anyone, and that those old locker room clichés had some validity. ("When the going gets tough, the tough get going." "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog." "A winner never quits and a quitter never wins.")

At various points in my life, I've faced some long odds, some trying times. I know that whatever character, whatever grace I've shown in those times is in no small measure a reflection of the lessons learned from Coach Kellam and, yes, Coach Davis.

I could, of course, go on and on about various individuals at Councill, and indeed, the larger Huntsville community who were positive influences on me. I could speak of the importance of Alabama A & M University and Oakwood College on developing young black minds, just how lucky we were to have these two institutions in our community because they too, like Councill, played key roles in bolstering our sense of self-worth and group pride. I can recall, vividly, being pulled along by my mother, as an elementary school boy, to see and hear such persons as Mordecai Johnson, Adam Clayton Powell, Mary McCleod Bethune, Marian Anderson, Duke Ellington. (I'm speaking of Huntsville, Alabama, in the early 1950's, and people have the nerve to call me culturally deprived!) Speaking as Vice President for Academic Affairs at another HBCU, I am most pleased to see these two institutions thriving today and continuing to serve as beacons of hope for the African American community, especially for African American youth. This group is at great peril today, ironically at greater peril than even that faced by my generation in the dark days of "Separate but Equal." They are battling forces much more lethal than mere segregation and its attendant evils. These young people are facing crises of value orientation and confidence. These are our children and grandchildren. My only prayer is that we have been able to pass on to them some vestiges, some remnants, of the world view we received at Councill.

In speaking of his upbringing, roughly around the time about which I have spoken, Clifton Taulbert makes a moving comment in his book *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*.

"I began to think about my childhood and other values I'd learned as I grew up in an environment much like that experienced by thousands of other colored Americans. Even though segregation was a painful reality for us, there were some very good things that happened. Today, I enjoy the broader society in which I live and I would never want to return to forced segregation, but I also have a deeply-felt sense that important values were conveyed to me in my colored childhood, values we're in danger of losing in our integrated world. As a child, I was not only protected but also nourished, encouraged, taught, and loved by people who, with no land, little money and few other resources, displayed the strength of a love which knew no measure. I have come to believe that this love is the true value, the legitimate measure of a people's worth."

"It is very difficult to master the present and make a meaningful contribution to the future unless you understand and appreciate the past--the good with the bad. I believe that to forget our colored past is to forget ourselves, who we are and what we've come from."

In the words of J. Rosemond Johnson,

"Lest our feet stray from the places our God where we meet Thee,  
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world we forget Thee,  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand.  
May we forever stand.  
True to our God.  
True to our Native Land."

Long live the memory and spirit of the William Hooper Council High School!

## HISTORY OF WILLIAM HOOPER COUNCILL HIGH SCHOOL (1867 - 1970)

Compiled by Mrs. Marguerite Lacey  
(former teacher, Councill High School)  
and Mr. Perry O. Ward  
(former attendance supervisor, Huntsville City Schools)

The school, "Dear Ole Councill," as it was affectionately called, has been known as the City School, Huntsville High School, Councill High School, and William Hooper Councill High School. The school was named for the founder of Alabama A&M University, William Hooper Councill, who was born of slave parents in Fayette, North Carolina.

In the year 1867, the first public school for the African-Americans of Huntsville, Alabama, was opened in the basement of the Lakeside Methodist Episcopal Church, then located on North Jefferson Street. The first principal was H. C. Binford, Sr. who served from 1867 until 1879. Mr. Binford was succeeded by Charles Hendley, Sr., who served from 1879 to 1890. His assistant teachers were Thomas S. Cooper, Miss Susie Martin, and the pastor of Lakeside Church. Mr. Hendley was succeeded by Thomas S. Cooper; the assistants to Mr. Hendley were retained under Mr. Cooper. Thomas Cooper's wife, Mrs. Annie England Cooper, taught during this period.

In June 1891 there was a committee of seven, with the Reverend W. H. Gaston serving as chairman of the meeting, to select men to find a suitable place for a school. The Reverend J. F. Humphrey moved that there be a representative from the city-at-large. The following were chosen: Dr. B. E. Scruggs of the Lakeside Methodist Episcopal Church, the Reverend W. H. Gaston of St. Bartley Primitive Baptist Church, the Reverend N. W. Wilkerson of the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Robert Jones of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, Arch Roberts of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, J. W. Betts of the Missionary Baptist Church, and Henderson Brandon, representative-at-large. William Harris later replaced Arch Roberts. The group selected the tract of land between Pump and Pearl Streets. This tract of land was given to the City of Huntsville by the Davis-Lowe family (a white family) for the purpose of building a school for African-American children.

The Reverend J. F. Humphrey, pastor of the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Church Street, North, became principal in 1892. While waiting for the new school to be completed, the temporary school was moved to the first floor of the Masonic Hall of Evening Star Lodge, Number 6, located then on Barnett Street, in a section known as Davis Grove. The new school was completed in 1892. Both the new building and the first floor of the Masonic Hall were used until six more classrooms were added to the school building.



Children who attended school in 1892 at the Masonic Hall of Evening Star, Number 6.  
*(Photograph by Ann Maulsby, courtesy of Huntsville–Madison County Public Library)*

The Reverend Humphrey served as principal from 1892 until 1898. His assistants were Miss Gertie McGill and Miss Julia Turner. In later years the following persons were added to the faculty: Miss Lila Rankins (Mrs. Lila Penny), Miss Madge Terrell, Mrs. Dan Jones, Miss Susie Rankins, Miss Hattie Beasley, and Laura Ross. Mrs. Maria Clay Clinton, one of the original Fisk Jubilee Singers, was music director.

H. C. Binford, Jr. assumed principalship after receiving the A.B. Degree from Howard University in the spring of 1898. He remained principal until 1905, at which time he resigned to accept a position as mathematics teacher in the Frederick Douglas High School in Baltimore, Maryland. He was succeeded by Mrs. Sophie Scruggs, who headed the school under the superintendency of Attorney James Pride. The school at this time had eight grades. Mrs. Scruggs served from 1905 to 1908.

In 1908 upon repeated requests from local citizens of both races, H. C. Binford, Jr. resigned from the faculty of the Frederick Douglas High School and returned to Huntsville once again to take over the principalship of the Huntsville school. His curriculum and schedules followed closely those of Frederick Douglas High School and the preparatory department of Howard University.

The first ninth grade diploma was awarded about 1912; the first tenth grade diploma in 1913; the first eleventh grade diploma in 1914, and the first twelfth grade diploma was awarded in 1915 to Miss Minnie Scruggs, who later became Mrs. Minnie Scruggs Gaston. This made the school truly a high school.

Because of ill health, H. C. Binford, Jr. retired in 1918. At the request of the Board of Education and the retiring principal, Charles V. Hendley became principal in the spring of 1918. After serving as principal, Hendley resigned to give full time to his practice of law. Some nineteen teachers served under his principalship. He left the school of May 21, 1921, and was succeeded by P. C. Parks, who served one year, September 1921 - May 1922. His faculty members were the same teachers who had served under Principal Hendley with one or two additions.

In the fall of 1922, P. C. Parks was succeeded by C. E. Powell, who served for eight years, until May 1930. The old frame building was replaced by a brick building in 1927 during the Powell administration.

In the fall of 1930, Powell was succeeded by J. F. Campbell, who had been assistant principal. Campbell served from September 1930 to May 1940. E. Z. Matthews became principal in the fall of 1940 and served about eighteen months, leaving sometime during the spring of 1942. He received his call to go



**Students of William H. Council High School, circa 1915**  
*(Photograph by Ann Maulsby, courtesy of Huntsville–Madison County Public Library)*



**William H. Council High School building built in 1927**  
*(Photograph by Ann Maulsby, courtesy of Huntsville–Madison County Public Library)*

into the armed forces in 1943. Mrs. Susie P. Gandy and Mrs. Helen P. Fearn took over the reins as co-principals in 1943 and retained the positions until 1948.

In the fall of 1948, F. E. James became principal and served in that capacity until the spring of 1953. During his tenure in office, two additional wings were added, providing a gymnasium, dining room, kitchen, library, and other rooms.

H. G. Fields became principal in the fall of 1953, and served for 16 years. During his administration, the school was accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. A marching and concert band was organized under the direction of Mr. Edwin S. Hill. Adam Kellam was coach at Council for 19 years. During this time his teams attained a record of 110-53-7, chalking up eight North Alabama High School Athletic Association Championships. He was inducted into the Huntsville Athletic Booster Club's Hall of Fame in April 1965. Coach Kellam's last team, the 1965 team, had a 9-0 record for that season. Council's football teams held the championship title in the conference more than the teams of any other school.

Integration in 1965-66 warranted a decline in enrollment at the school. The last high school graduation exercise to be held at Council was in the spring of 1966. In 1967, Council was reduced from grades one through twelve to grades one through nine. In 1968 it became a school for eight grades. In 1969, the school became an elementary school for grades one through six. Mr. Jerry Davis, a teacher and former basketball coach, became principal at that time. He was the last principal of William Hooper Council High School.



William H. Council High School building in 1994  
used by Arts Council groups

*(Photograph by Ernest C. Smartt, courtesy of Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)*

## COMMENTS ON THE EXPANSION OF HISTORY

by Johanna Nicol Shields

Professor and Chair, Department of History  
The University of Alabama in Huntsville

Until the 1960s, it could be said with some accuracy that most American history was "past politics." The subject matter of history reflected the interests of the men who wrote it—and in the early days of the discipline historians were nearly all Anglo-American men. Their background and training generally took place at one of a small number of highly selective (and expensive) universities in this country and abroad. In the decades after World War II, historians and history changed. Under the influence of the GI Bill, at first, and the National Defense Education Act, later, graduate programs mushroomed around the country and students began to be drawn from a more representative slice of the American population: from among women, the working class, recent immigrant families, and African-Americans, for example. Not surprisingly, these scholars knew that history was also about people like them, too. They opened new areas of investigation and brought new techniques to the study of ordinary people's lives. The new social history, of which family history and community history were parts, often required quantitative skills, knowledge of how to do genealogy, painstaking research in the raw census records and in state and local tax or probate records, marriage, birth, and death registers, and many other hidden places where plain people's lives could be reconstructed.

The history of the family is particularly intriguing since membership in a family is a common denominator for nearly all people. All of the opportunities and problems of society at large focus in the family in one way or another. The family was long at the center of the national economy as its chief unit of production. Families shape and are shaped by politics. As a result, it is accurate to say that no area of American history has gone unchanged by what scholars specializing in family history have learned. Much the same can be said of community history and the history of institutions within communities. These are topics that interest everyone. The history of family and community are reflected in our personal histories and they can be related to our present-day experiences. In contemporary public discussions, we often assume ideal historical models; yet, in fact, family and community structures, relationships, and values have exhibited enormous variation over time, by class, race, ethnicity, and region. Because this is true, when people contribute to the writing of their own histories, what professional historians know is expanded. Thus essays like those included in this publication may lay foundations for new understandings of Huntsville and its people.

(Taken from introductory remarks for the annual History Forum, "In Search of the American Family," April, 1994.)

## ACADEMY STUDENTS UNRAVELING MYSTERIES OF BLACK CEMETERY

by Phillip Taylor

Studying the C. C. Moore family burial plot at Glenwood Cemetery, Jeremy Murdock and his classmates from the Academy for Science and Foreign Language walked around the cement border of the site trying to figure the ways in which the bodies might lie. Surviving family members had told the eighth grade students that only six bodies were buried in the plot, but Jeremy, 13, was convinced it could hold at least three more.

But the academy students have their work cut out for them as only one tombstone—that of a son, Antonio Maceo Moore—remains in the burial plot. "Why is this tombstone all the way back here?" Jeremy asked as he outlined how nine sites could easily fit in the plot. "They probably buried someone here and there and there."

Unraveling some of the mysteries lying in Glenwood Cemetery, a black Huntsville gravesite tucked between West Clinton Avenue and Memorial Parkway exit ramps of Interstate 565, is one of the goals of the academy's Heritage class. According to Principal Ollye Doyle Conley, academy teachers formed the class to encourage students to research and enjoy history, particularly the history of their families and community. And they combined the talents of science teacher Robert Rice, social studies teacher Barbara Stevens and English teacher Sheryl Lee to do so.

But for their first project—documenting the African-American presence in Huntsville from the 1800s to 1910—the students and teachers found that little information besides slave records is available.

Science teacher Robert Rice said eighth-graders were concerned that knowledge of early African-American contributions to Huntsville could be lost, especially after a tour of Maple Hill Cemetery and downtown Huntsville. "We found that it hasn't been documented very well," Rice said. "There is very little shown in written Huntsville history."

So the class collects information from several different resources. Classroom visitors have included local historian Dr. Frances Roberts and Brenda Webb, manager of cemeteries for the City of Huntsville. And support has come from the community, the school's PTA and others. The detective work eventually led to on-site observations including visits to Glenwood Cemetery.

"Too bad they kept such bad records and didn't maintain this place," Jeremy said during a recent visit. "Only half of the hundred graves have records and only half have tombstones."

The class started with the family burial plot of C. C. Moore—Huntsville's first African-American postal worker—mainly because his grandson, Ronald, lives in Huntsville. Ronald Moore, who lives in the white Victorian home on Pulaski Pike which his grandfather purchased in 1903, met with the class to offer photographs, records and an oral history for their research. From Moore they learned that C. C. Moore was an entrepreneur who operated a fruit stand, cafe, drugstore, shoe shop and restaurant at various times. The branches of his family tree included a son who fought in the Spanish-American War, another who fought in World War I, and a daughter who died in college from a dormitory fall.

But answers, the students found, often lead to more questions. Why were tombstones never placed over the sites of the other family members buried in Glenwood? Who is actually buried there? Why did Moore hold so many jobs? What connections did Moore and others in Glenwood have with people who were buried in Maple Hill?

By answering some of those and other questions, the students will have the feeling of making a contribution to their community, said Roxanne Wysock, president-elect of the academy's PTA. "We tell them, 'You'll be a part of history if you gather this information. And you can take some credit for this.'" Mrs. Wysock said. "They will feel some ownership with this cemetery."

The academy continues to search for information, documents and photographs which illustrate early black history in Huntsville. Those interested can call the school at 851-4100.

*(This article courtesy of The Huntsville Times)*



*(Photograph by Alan Warren, Huntsville Times)*

If you know someone who may be interested in becoming a member of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, please share this application for membership.

HUNTSVILLE-MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P. O. Box 666  
Huntsville, AL 35804

Membership Application 1994-95

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephones: Home \_\_\_\_\_

Work \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues:      Individual: \$10.00      Family: \$18.00

My check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ payable to Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society includes a subscription to *The Huntsville Historical Review* and all the Society's activities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



The purpose of this society is to afford an agency for expression among those having a common interest in collecting, preserving and recording the history of Huntsville and Madison County. Communications concerning the organization should be addressed to the President at P. O. Box 666, Huntsville, Alabama 35804.

Manuscripts for possible publication should be directed to the Publications Committee at the same address. Articles should pertain to Huntsville or Madison County. Articles on the history of other sections of the state will be considered when they relate in some way to Madison County. All copy, including footnotes, should be double spaced. The author should submit an original and one copy.

*The Huntsville Historical Review* is sent to all members of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society. Annual membership is \$10.00 for an individual and \$18.00 for a family. Libraries and organizations may receive the *Review* on a subscription basis for \$10.00 per year. Single issues may be obtained for \$5.00 each.

Responsibility for statements of facts or opinions made by contributors to the *Review* is not assumed by either the Publications Committee or the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society. Questions or comments concerning articles in this journal should be directed to the Editor, P. O. Box 666, Huntsville, Alabama 35804.

Permission to reprint any article in whole or in part is given, provided credit is given to the *Review*.

**Huntsville-Madison County  
Historical Society**

Box 666

Huntsville, Alabama 35804

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
HUNTSVILLE, AL  
PERMIT NO. 4