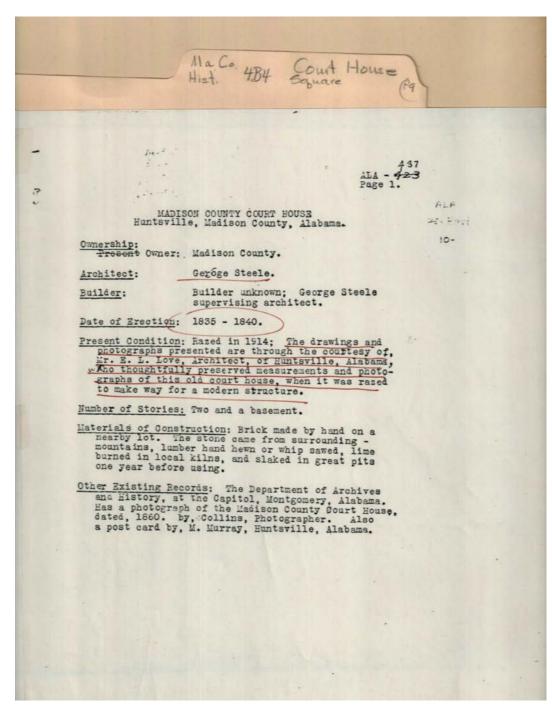
Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

Image 1 r04b04-09-000-0068 Contents Index About



Names:

Collins,

Love, E. L.

Places:

Huntsville, AL

**Types:** 

notes

**Dates:** 

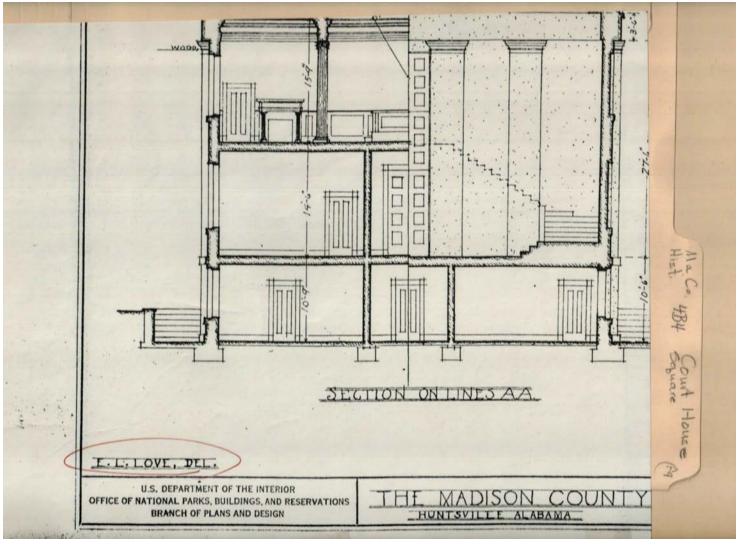
1835-1914

Madison County Murray, M. Courthouse

y, M. Steele, George Architect

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

Image 2 r04b04-09-000-0069 Contents Index About



Names:

Love, E. L.

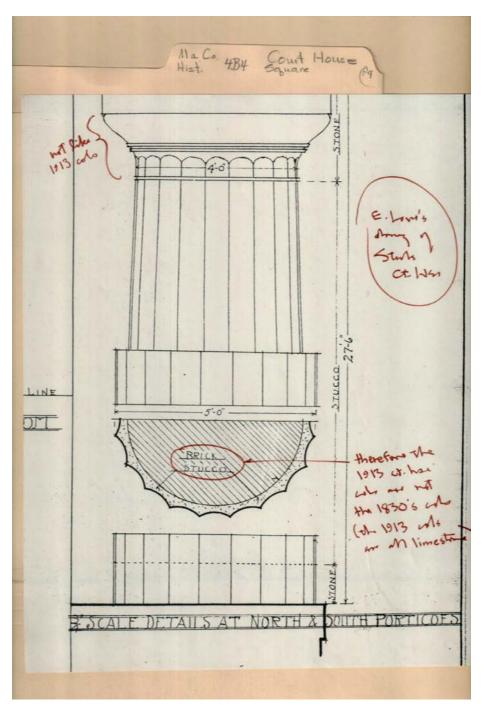
**Places:** 

Huntsville, AL

**Types:** 

drawing

r04b04-09-000-0070 Contents <u>Index</u> Image 3 **About** 



Names:

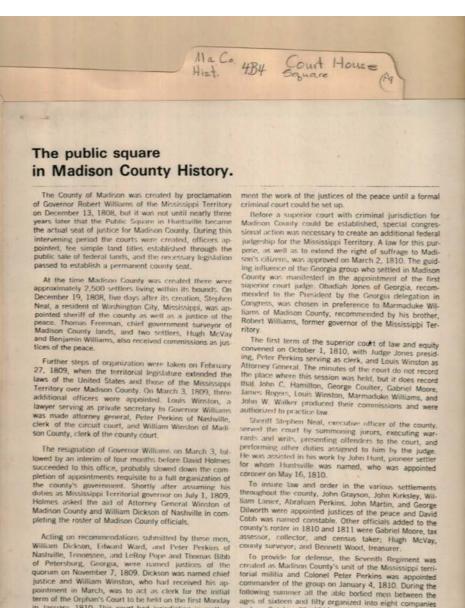
Love, E. L.

**Types:** 

drawing

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

r04b04-09-000-0071 Contents Index Image 4 **About** 



#### Names:

Bibb, Thomas Cobb, David Coulter, George Dickson, William Dilworth, George Freeman, Thomas, Surveyor Grayson, John Hamilton, John C.

Places:

Huntsville, AL

Holmes, David, Governor Hunt, John Jones, Obadiah Kirksley, John Lanier, William Martin, John McVay, Hugh Moore, Gabriel

in January, 1810. This court had jurisdiction in matters concerning the settlement of estates, care of the poor, transfer of lands, laying out of roads, licensing of min-isters, and enrolling of lawyers. If also served to supple

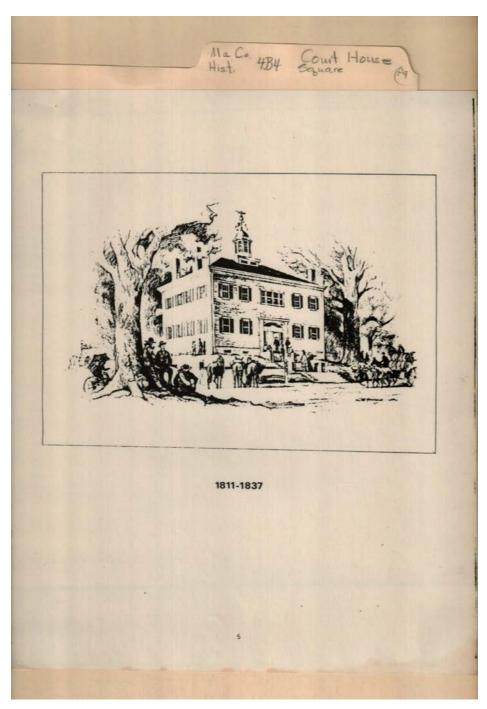
> Neal, Stephen, Sheriff Perkins, Abraham Perkins, Peter Pope, LeRoy Public Square in Huntsville Rogers, James Walker, John W. Ward, Edward

ages of sixteen and fifty organized into eight companies and on October 29, 1810, the first county-wide muster was held. Governor David Holmes attended at the request of Louis Winston who felt that the Governor's presence would have a tendency to quiet some of the discontent

Williams, Benjamin Williams, Marmaduke Williams, Robert, Governor Winston, Louis Winston, William Wood, Bennett

## **Types:**

Frances Cabaniss Roberts Collection: Series 4, Subseries B, Box 4, Folder 9
Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings
Image 5 r04b04-09-000-0072 Contents Index About



#### Names:

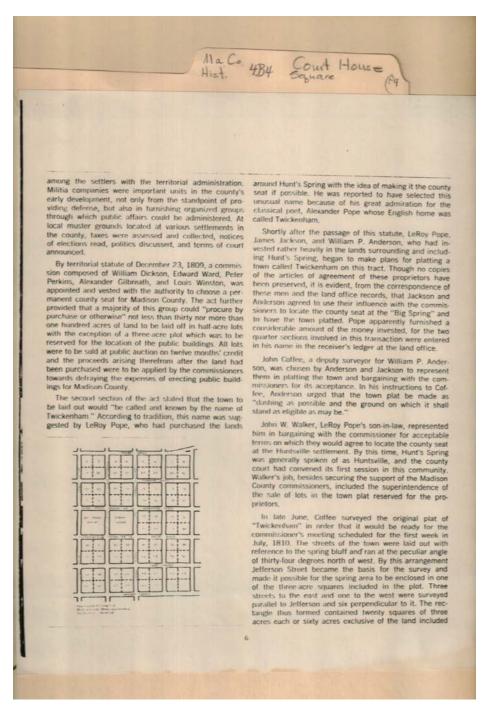
Early Courthouse

## **Types:**

drawing

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

Image 6 r04b04-09-000-0073 <u>Contents</u> <u>Index</u> <u>About</u>



#### Names:

Anderson, William P. Coffee, John Dickson, William

Places:

Huntsville, AL

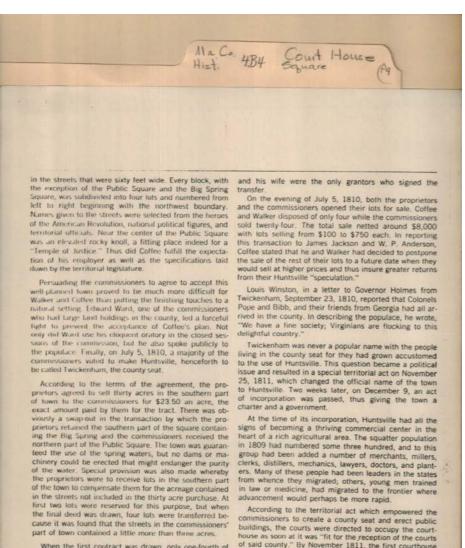
**Types:** 

essay

Gilbreath, Alexander Jackson, James Perkins, Peter Pope, Alexander Pope, LeRoy Walker, John W. Ward, Edward Winston, Louis

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

r04b04-09-000-0074 Image 7 Contents Index **About** 



When the first contract was drawn, only one-fourth of the purchase price of the land had been paid. Consequently, it was not until the final payment was made on February 3, 1815 that a patent was issued to Pope for three, range one west on which Huntsville was situated. In the meantime he had been successful in purchasing the interests of the other proprietors, and when the deed to the town was drawn up on September 1, 1815, Pope

commissioners to create a county seat and erect public buildings, the courts were directed to occupy the court-house as soon at it was "fit for the reception of the courts of said county." By November 1811, the first courthouse had been completed to the point that its courtroom could be used for the fall term of Superior Court.

The two-story brick structure on the highest part of the Public Square faced south. At first only the lower story was completed to house the county officials and the courts. The basement portion which opened on the north was apparently used for a public market place. On the northeast corner of the Public Square a small wooden

#### Names:

Anderson, William P. Bibb, Colonel Coffee,

Places:

Huntsville, AL

**Types:** 

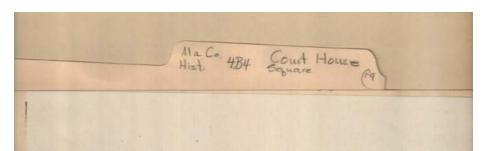
essay

Holmes, David, Governor Jackson, James

Pope, Colonel Walker, Ward, Edward Winston, Louis

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

Image 8 r04b04-09-000-0075 <u>Contents</u> <u>Index</u> <u>About</u>



Jail with pillory was constructed to care for public offenders.

During this early period the courthouse served as a meeting place for both civic and religious groups, and the Public Square became the hub of commercial activity as stores were constructed on all sides of it.

Not until after the depressing years of the War of 1812 did the county officials take the necessary steps to provide for the completion of the second story of the count-house. By a special territorial act of December 16, 1816, the justices of county court were empowered to act as commissioners to contract for and superintend its completion. The measure also provided for the purchase of a suitable lot upon which to construct an adequate jail and pillory.

On June 10, 1817, William M. Watkins and John H. Hickman entered into a contract with LeRoy Pope, Abner Tatum, and David Moore, Justices of the Quorum, to undertake the completion of the courthouse within five months. The agreement included placement of encased window sashes in the upper story, repairing the crown molding of the corrice, covering the roof of the courthouse and its cupola with new poplar shingles, remodeling the cupola, and topping it with "a new and neat turned block, dressed off with gold liner and a new speare (sic) and twin blocks dressed off with gill and crown the whole with a neat gill Eagle not less than three feet across."

When it was determined that the undesignated funds in the county treasury were not sufficient to cover the cost of completing the courthouse and constructing a jail, a special tax not to exceed one-half of the territorial levy was authorized by the legislature on February 13, 1818, to provide the necessary finances. Although no permanent record was made of construction and total cost of the first public buildings, Judge Thomas Jones Taylor stated in his Early History of Madison County that the second jail was constructed on lot number fourteen located at the corner of Greene and Clinton Streets.

By 1818, the Public Square had become the hub of extensive activity. Ann Royal in her travel account, Letters from Alabama, reported on January 1, 1818, that Hunts-wille contained 260 houses made principally of bricks, a bank, a courthouse, a market place, and many stores. Commenting on the Square she wrote: There is a large square in the center of the town, like the town in Ohio, facing this are the stores, twelve in number. The buildings form a solid wall, though divided into apartments. The workmanship is the best I have seen in all the State;

and several of the houses are three stories high and very large. There is no church. The people assemble at the Court House to worship. Huntsville is settled by people mostly from Georgia and the Carolinas — though there are a few from almost every part of the world: — and the town displays much activity. The citizens are gay, polite, and hospitable, and live in great splendor. Nothing like it in our country.

In August of 1819, another writer described the county seat thus: Huntsville is the principal and oldest town in the Valley of (The) Tennessee (River), and is the capital of Madison County. The United States have here a land office which, since its establishment (1811), has done more business than any two others. It has a bank with a capital of 500,000 dollars (Planters and Merchants Bank); two printing offices, and 2,500 inhabitants. It is a most flourishing town, in the midst of one of the finest counties on earth. Here met the Convention in July, 1819, to frame the Constitution for the government of the State.

The convention mentioned in this description convened in Huntsville's Assembly hall located on the corner of Franklin and Gates Streets on July 5, 1819, and by August 2 it had written and adopted Alabama's first state constitution. Since many of the political leaders of the newly created Alabama Territory lived in Madison County, it was through their influence that Huntsville was chosen as the temporary capital of the state from July through December of 1819.

After the Constitution was completed, elections were held throughout Alabama on the third Monday and Tuesday of September 1819, to choose state officials and members of the legislature. On October 25, the legislature convened in temporary quarters to begin its work. On November 7, the House of Representatives began holding its meetings in the courtroom on the ground floor of the courthouse, and on November 9, William Wyatt Bibb was inaugurated governor in this room in the presence of a joint session of the House and Senate. Normally, the Senate held its deliberations in a room located in the house of James Dunn which was rented for this purpose. The work of this first legislative session was monumental in that it set in motion patterns of state and local government that served the needs of the people for many years.

Within the next few years the legislature provided a uniform system of government for all counties in the state. Since Madison, County had been one of the seven units of local government created prior to the formation

#### Names:

Bibb, William Wyatt Dunn, James Hickman, John H.

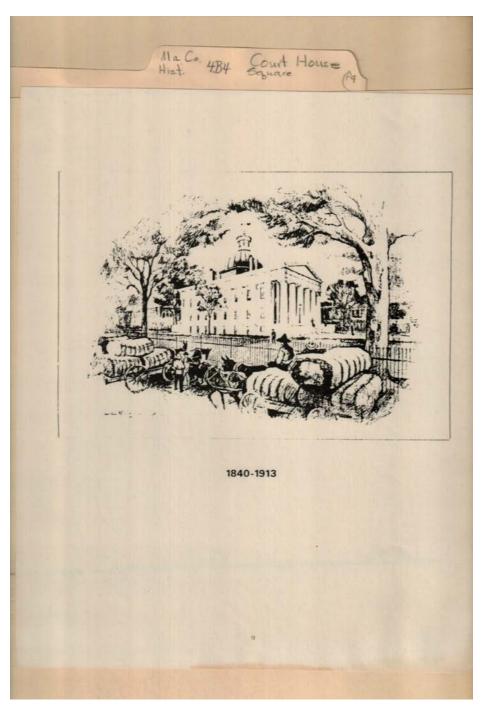
Places:

Huntsville, AL

**Types:** 

essay

Moore, David Pope, LeRoy Royal, Ann Tatum, Abner Taylor, Thomas Jones, Judge Watkins, William M. Letters from Alabama



Names:

Courthouse

**Places:** 

Huntsville, AL

**Types:** 

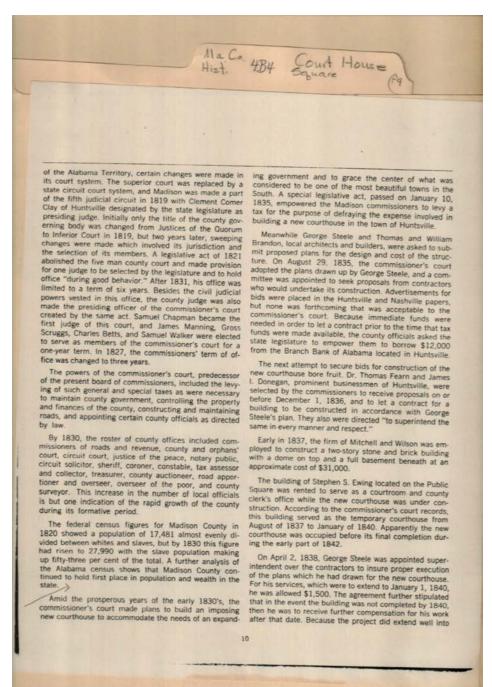
drawing

**Dates:** 

1840-1913

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

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#### Names:

Betts, Charles Brandon, Thomas Brandon, William Chapman, Samuel

#### Places:

Huntsville, AL

#### **Types:**

essay

Clay, Clement Comer Donegan, James I. Ewing, Stephen S. Fearn, Thomas, Dr. Manning, James Mitchell, Scruggs, Gross Steele, George, Architect Walker, Samuel Wilson,

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

r04b04-09-000-0078 Image 11 Contents Index **About** 

> Ma Co 4B4 Court House

1840, he was further compensated \$500, thus bringing his total fee as architect and superintendent to \$2,000.

As the work got under way, the old courthouse was sold at auction for \$494.00 and removed. The ten-foot elevation on which it stood was then graded down and the rock used in macatamizing the area around the

Originally the contract called for a tin roof for the structure, but in 1839 the commissioner's court voted to spend the extra money necessary to obtain a copper covering for the root and dome. The expense involved in this change added \$3,906.02 to the original cost anticipated and involved considerable time in securing the copper from a firm in Baltimore, Maryland.

On July 22, 1839, a contract was drawn between the commissioner's court and Thomas R. Rayon between the construction of a stone wall with oval corners around the courthouse to reach within fourteen feet of the streets on the Public Square. At this time, a contract with C. T. and R. Parker was also signed which provided for an iron railing to be placed on the stone wall. The total cost of closure included \$4,761.25 for stone work and \$4,000 for the iron rail and gates

Records of payments made to Mitchell and Wilson over a period from December 27, 1837, to February 7, 1842, show that they received \$33,893.37 for construction of the courthouse and grading the ground around it. The total experse involving this contract, the superintendent's fee, the copper root, and other incidentals came to \$40,175.00. To this figure was added the cost of enclosing the courthouse square which amounted to \$8,761.00.

Incoming revenues to defray the expenses of improving the public buildings and other costs of local government were defined thus by the commissioner's court on May 4, were defined thus by the commissioner's court on May 4, 1840: Ordered the following be the rates of taxation for the year 1841 being by the authority of Acts of the Legis-lature to raise a revenue for building a new courthouse and other purposes to wit: On every \$100 worth of land, ten cents; an every \$100 worth of town property, ten cents; an every \$100 worth of merchandize sold from, the first day of May 1839 to first day of May, 1840, twenty cents; on each slave not exceeding ten years old, sixteen cents; on each slave over ten and under sixty years of age, cents; on each stave over ten and under sixty years or age, titty-six cents; on each free male negro or mulatto, over the age of twenty-one years, one dollar; on each \$100 worth of pleasure carriage and harness, fifty cents; on each race, saddle or carriage horse, fifty cents; on each public race tract, ten dollars; ... on each gold watch, one dollar; on each silver or other watch, forty cents; on

each metal clock, one dollar; on each clock not metal, twenty-five cents; on every \$100 loaned at interest, twenty-five cents; on each pack of playing cards sold, given away, loaned or otherwise disposed of, twenty-five cents; on all goods sold at auction, other than exempted by law, two percentum; on each share of bank stock of \$100 value in said state, one dollar; on each billiard table kept for play, \$150 including state tax; on all white males kept for play, \$150 including state tax, on all white males over twenty-one and not more than forty-five years, twenty-five cents; and on such things as are not herein enumerated and were heretofore objects of state taxation, the amount of the state and said county tax for the year 1835, and it is further ordered that thirty percentum be added to the foregoing taxation for the purpose of defraying in part the building of a bridge across Flint River at the three forks thereof. the three forks thereof.

As soon as the new courthouse had been completed, As soon as the new courthouse had been completed, plans were set in motion to construct a larger jail, and a legislative act of 1843 made provision for Madison County to levy a special tax to cover the cost of it. Since the records of the commissioner's court are missing for the years 1844-1849, no figures are available to ascertain the cost of its construction. In 1862, however, it was partially destroyed by federal occupying forces and replaced at a cost of \$2,500.

One further addition was made to the courthouse in One further addition was made to the courniouse in 1849 when the town and county governments cooperated in installing a large four-faced clock on top of its dome. This timepiece continued to serve the town of Huntsville until it was dismantled in 1964 to make way for the present courthouse, but as of January, 1967 its bell once again rang out the time on each half hour.

again rang out the time on each half hour.

Between 1830 and 1860 no radical changes were made in Madison County's government, but a number of offices were created. In 1833, the duties of assessing and collecting taxes were turned over to a tax assessor and a collector. In 1839, a district chancery court was created and a chancellor appointed to handle its affairs. At the county level a register in chancery was appointed the same year. In 1850, the probate court was established by a general legislative act which substituted such a court in every Alabama county for the early county court that had previously exercised probate jurisdiction and John W. Oatey became its first judge. At this time the county court's jurisdiction in civil suits was transferred to the circuit court. In 1856, the office of county superintendent of education was created to administer free public schools which had been created by general legislative action for the whole state of Alabama in 1854.

#### Names:

Mitchell, Parker, C. T.

Places:

Huntsville, AL

**Types:** 

essay

Parker, R. Rayon, Thomas R. Wilson.

Image 12 r04b04-09-000-0079 Contents Index About

Court House On the eve of the Civil War, Madison County was still considered one of the wealthier areas of the state and its siderably diminished in terms of state affairs. Tennessee Valley political leaders were no longer serious contenders for the governorship or other state offices. political influence in state affairs remained strong. Huntsville also continued to be a key economic and cultural center in the Tennessee Valley. Because of its strategic position on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, it was After the adoption of the Alabama constitution of 1901, Madison County government became less autonomous. While continuing to retain its traditional functions regardoccupied by federal troops as early as April 11, 1862, and continued to suffer the privations imposed by occuing strictly local affairs, the county became more and more an administrative district of the state. As federal pation until the war ended in 1865. and state governments began to assume more responsi-bility for rendering services to people, Alabama tightened When it became evident that the courthouse would be taken over by federal military officials, most of the public records were removed to Blount County for safekeeping. its control over tax assessment and collection, law en-forcement, election administration, education, health, and Though the courthouse itself weathered the ravages of the war period, it, like many other structures in the town, public welfare at the county level. As the number of county officials increased, the second received some permanent scars. courthouse was no longer adequate to furnish office space for them. Once again, as in the 1830's, the com-The reconstruction years in Madison County, in many respects, were more trying than the war years had been. This period was marked by inefficiency in government at missioner's court began to consider the feasibility of con-structing a new courthouse. The commissioners as well all levels as well as economic depression. With the adoption of the Alabama constitution in 1875, local and state as the people were divided on the question. government resurned a more normal pattern of existence, and economy and honesty in government were empha-sized to the detriment of needed educational and health At a mass meeting held to discuss the matter on Feb ruary 15, 1913, those who wished to preserve the imposing Parthenon-like structure insisted that it could be enlarged and improved to accommodate the needs of county government. Others who wanted a new and modern structure reasoned that the building should reservices. In 1879, a board of education was created for Madison County, but adequate financial aid to public education was not forthcoming until the first decade of the twentieth flect the intelligence and progress of the people, and that visitors to the county would be more impressed with century. The post of county health officer was created as early as 1881, but it was not until after a series of typhoid that visitors to the county would be more impressed with a new courthouse than the old delapidated one which stood on the Public Square. Some pointed out that they did not believe that the old courthouse could stand re-modelling or reconstruction since the walls were badly cracked. One prominent citizen favored a new courthouse epidemics in Huntsville that a movement was begun which resulted in the establishment of a Madison County Health Department in 1918. Between 1880 and 1900, business leaders of Madison to be placed somewhere else so that the old building could be used as a place for exhibitions of products and County worked to improve agriculture and bring in a variety of industries which would revitalize the economy. Nurseries were established, cotton textile mills built, and an assortment of small factories opened to produce as a home for county people when they spent the day in the city. The Chamber of Commerce presented a series of resolutions urging the construction of a new courthouse on the basis of such needs as adequate space for the wood products, small tools and implements. Monte Sano Mountain was developed as a summer resort in 1887 to daily transactions of government, adequate protection for valuable county records, and needed restrooms for attract tourists from all parts of the nation — a venture which prospered until 1900. Diversification in agriculture the convenience of county people. brought increased prosperity to Madison County's rural population, and this prosperity in turn aided the expansion of commercial interests in the town of Huntsville. After considering the question for two months, the commissioner's court voted on March 26, 1913, to remodel and improve the old courthouse at a cost not to exceed \$75,000. On April 21, the plans of architect C. K. Colley of Nashville were accepted with the stipula-The federal census of 1910 listed the population of Huntsville as 7,611 and that of Madison County as 47,040 thus showing an increase of almost one hundred per cent within a fifty-year period. Although the county remained economically prosperous, its political influence was contion that bids for construction would not exceed \$65,000. According to his plan, only the columns and sidewalls of the old building would be retained, and two wings with

#### Names:

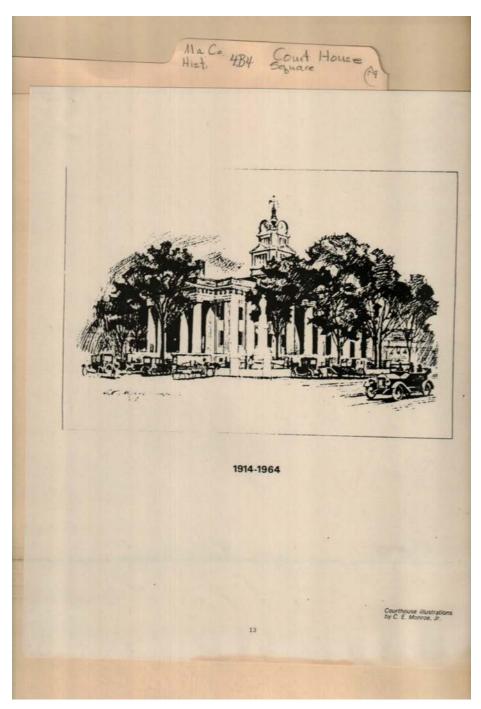
Colley, C. K., Architect

#### Places:

Huntsville, AL

#### **Types:**

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#### Names:

Courthouse

#### **Places:**

Huntsville, AL

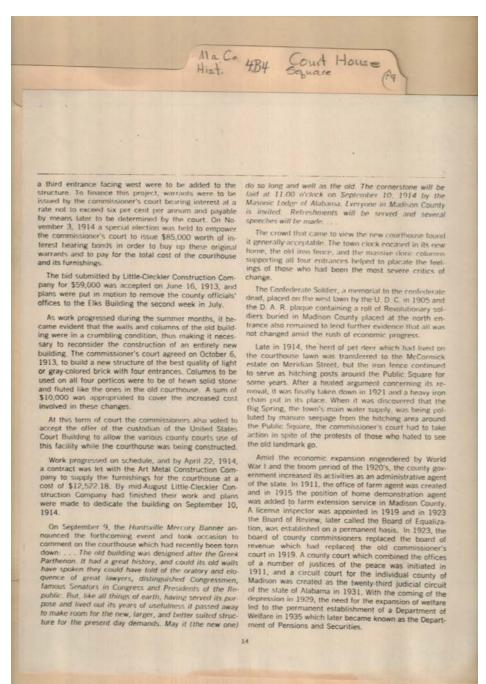
#### **Types:**

drawing

#### **Dates:**

1914-1-64

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Names:

Art Metal Construction Co.

Little-Cleckler Construction Co.

McCormick,

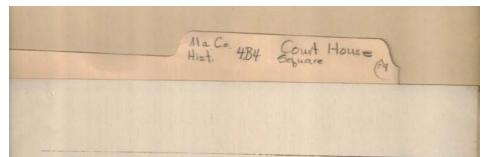
Places:

Huntsville, AL

**Types:** 

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

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By 1937, the courthouse had again become inadequate to house the daily activities of county government and the Eliks Building on Eusis Street was acquired to relieve the situation. Extensive renovation of the courthouse in 1940 brought some relied but not enough to take care of the needs of an expanding population.

With the advent of the Tennessee Valley Authority, created by act of Congress in 1933, the potential for great economic expansion in Madison County, as well as the whole valley, soon became apparent. The varied T.V.A. programs resulting in more adequate flood control, improved water transportation, better land utilization, and the production of abundant hydroelectric power, did much to aid the valley's recovery from the depression years of the 1930's.

Between 1940 and 1966 Madison County experienced the largest population growth in its history. In 1941, just before the outbreak of World War II, the federal government made plans to place two large installations just south of the city of Huntsville. The Chemical Warfare Service built a chemical manufacturing plant on a site which became the Huntsville Arsenal, and the Ordnance Department constructed a shell loading plant close by at Redstone Arsenal. As the end of the war approached, the work force at these two installations had grown to 20,000.

Shortly after V-J Day on September 2, 1945, all production facilities were placed on standby. Not until June 1, 1949, when Redstone Arsonal was reactivated to fulfill a new mission for the Ordnance Department, did the military contribute substantially to the growth of the county's economy. With the transfer of a small group of German missile experts to Huntsville in 1950, there began a new era. The areas included in both arsenals were combined to form the Redstone Arsenal complex which, by 1966, included extensive activity related to research, development, and training for missile and space vehicle programs. Total employment of the George C. Marshall Space Flight Center and the various United States Army missile facilities had reached approximately 40,000 with an annual payroll of more than \$200 million. The total yearly industrial payroll for Madison County had reached a figure of more than \$460 million and the annual agricultural income stood at a figure in excess of \$23 million.

Census reports also reflected the extent of Madison County's growth. In 1950, its official population stood at 72,903, in 1960 at 117,348, and in September 1964 at 173,284. The dramatic jump in Huntsville's population from 16,437 in 1950 to 22,360 in 1960 can be explained in part by the extension of the city limits in 1956 to in-

clude many of the suburban areas that had grown up around it for a period of fifty years. However, the fact that Huntsville's population doubled between 1960 and 1966 to reach an estimated 144,000 by January 1, 1967, can best be attributed to its increased role in the missile and space effort of the United States.

Amid the rapid transformation taking place in all segments of life in Madison County, planning became a key factor in the activities of both city and county governing bodies. Working together, these governments set in motion extensive expansion and planning programs to allow orderly growth and to provide adequate services to its people. Such planning included a new municipal building, courthouse, library, auditorium, arts center, and community park areas.

Planning for a new courthouse began as early as April 13, 1961, when the board of commissioners voted to secure the services of Space Utilization Associates to survey the space needs of the county. On December 4, 1961, the chairman of the board of county commissioners was authorized to employ two architectural firms, recommended by this group, to draw up preliminary plans for a new building. Three months later on March 2, 1962, the Madison County Public Building Authority was created to implement the financing of the new courthouse. James R. Cleary became autorney for this group to help work out the details of financing which included a plan whereby \$4,501,500 could be secured by the sale of bonds and funded over a period of thirty years. On August 20, 1962, the commissioners voted to retain the Public Square as the location of the new building and raze the existing courthouse.

Public hearings were set for October to let citizens express their views concerning this decision. Once again those who loved the old familiar atmosphere of the Public Square tried to keep it intact, but the forces of change were too strong to allow the "nineteenth century look" to remain. When the Huntsville Historical Society, one of the chief defenders of historic preservation, realized its cause was futile, its members sought to compromise with those who wanted a "modern look" on the Public Square by urging that the architecture of the new courthouse be of a "timeless type." They also urged that the southeastern residential section of "Old Huntsville" be protected by the creation of an historical zone to be known as the Twickenham District.

After considering the advice of architects, engineers, and geologists concerning the suitability of the Public Square for a multi-story structure, the commissioners

15

Names:

Cleary, James R.

Courthouse discussed

Huntsville Arsenal

**TVA** 

Places:

Huntsville, AL

**Types:** 

essay

**Dates:** 

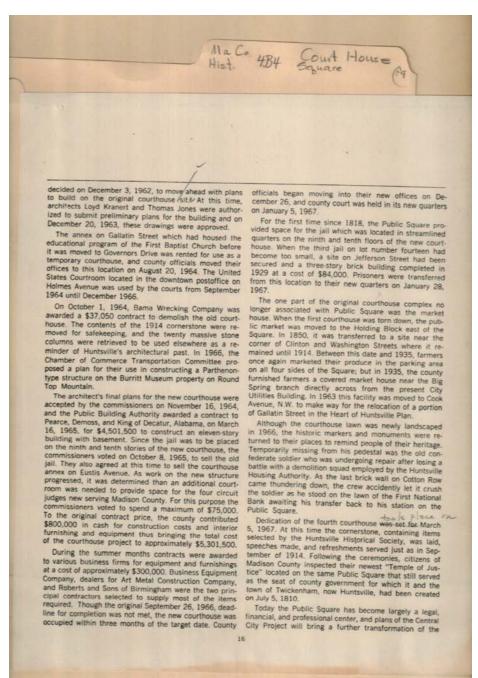
1933

33 1941

1962

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#### Names:

Bama Wrecking Company Courthouse dedicated

Places:

Huntsville, AL

**Types:** 

essay

**Dates:** 

Mar 05, 1967

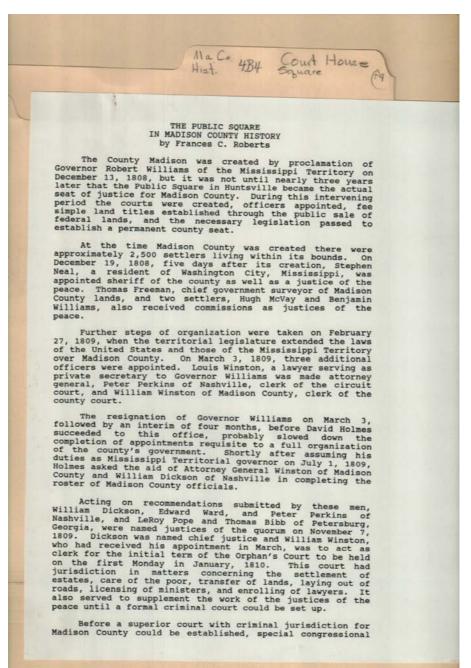
Jones, Thomas, architect

Kranert, Loyd, architect

Pearce, Demoss, and King Roberts and Sons

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

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#### Names:

Bibb, Thomas Dickson, William Freeman, Thomas, Surveyor

#### Places:

Madison County, AL

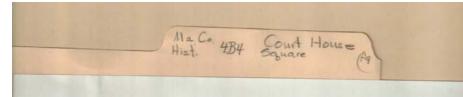
#### **Types:**

essay

Holmes, David, Governor McVay, Hugh Neal, Stephen, Sheriff Perkins, Peter Pope, LeRoy Roberts, Frances C. Square in Madison County History Ward, Edward Williams, Benjamin Williams, Robert, Governor Winston, Louis Winston, William

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

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action was necessary to create an additional federal judgeship for the Mississippi Territory. A law for this purpose, as well as to extend the right of suffrage to Madison's citizens, was approved on March 2, 1810. The guiding influence of the Georgia group who settled in Madison County was manifested in the appointment of the first superior court judge. Obadiah Jones of Georgia, recommended to the President by the Georgia delegation in Congress, was chosen in preference to Marmaduke Williams of Madison County, recommended by his brother, Robert Williams, former governor of the Mississippi Territory.

The first term of the superior court of law and equity convened on October 1, 1810, with Judge Jones presiding, Peter Perkins serving as clerk, and Louis Winston as Attorney General. The minutes of the court do not record the place where this session was held, but it does record that John C. Hamilton, George Coulter, Gabriel Moore, James Roberts, Louis Winston, Marmaduke Williams, and John W. Walker produced their commissions and were authorized to practice law.

Sheriff Stephen Neal, executive officer of the county, served the court by summoning jurors, executing warrants and writs, presenting offenders to the court, and performing other duties assigned to him by the judge. He was assisted in his work by John Hunt, pioneer settler for whom Huntsville was named, who was appointed coroner on May 16, 1810.

To insure law and order in the various settlements throughout the county, John Grayson, John Kirksley, William Lanier, Abraham Perkins, John Martin, and George Dilworth were appointed justices of the peace and David Cobb was named constable. Other officials added to the county's roster in 1810 and 1811 were Gabriel Moore, tax assessor, collector, and census taker; Hugh McVay, county surveyor; and Bennett Wood, treasurer.

To provide for defense, the Seventh Regiment was created as Madison County's unit of the Mississippi territorial militia and Colonel Peter Perkins was appointed commander of the group on January 4, 1810. During the following summer all the able bodied men between the ages of sixteen and fifty organized into eight companies and on October 29, 1810, the first county-wide muster was held. Governor David Holmes attended at the request of Louis Winston who felt that the Governor's presence would have a tendency to quiet some of the discontent among the settlers with the territorial administration. Militia companies were important units in the county's early development, not only from the standpoint of providing defense, but also in furnishing organized groups through which public affairs could be administered. At local muster grounds, located at various settlements in the county, taxes were assessed and collected, notices of elections read, politics discussed, and terms of court announced.

By territorial statute of December 23, 1809, a commission composed of William Dickson, Edward Ward, Peter

#### Names:

Cobb, David Coulter, George Dilworth, George Grayson, John Hamilton, John C. Hunt, John

Kirksley, John Lanier, William Martin, John McVay, Hugh Moore, Gabriel

Jones, Obadiah

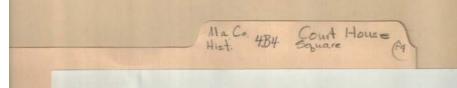
Neal, Stephen, Sheriff Perkins, Abraham Perkins, Peter Roberts, James Walker, John W. Williams, Marmaduke Williams, Robert Winston, Louis

#### **Places:**

Madison County, AL

#### **Types:**

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four degrees north of west. By this arrangement, Jefferson Street became the basis for the survey and made it possible for the spring area to be enclosed in one of the three-acre squares included in the plat. Three streets to the east and one to the west were surveyed parallel to Jefferson and six perpendicular to it. The rectangle thus formed contained twenty squares of three acres each, or sixty acres, exclusive of the land included in the streets that were sixty feet wide. Every block, with the exception of the Public Square and the Big Spring Square, was subdivided into four lots and numbered from left to right beginning with the northwest boundary. Names given to the streets were selected from the heroes of the American Revolution, national political figures, and territorial officials. Near the center of the Public Square was an elevated rocky knoll, a fitting place indeed for a "Temple of Justice." Thus did coffee fulfill the expectation of his employer as well as the specifications laid down by the territorial legislature.

Persuading the commissioners to agree to accept this well-planned town proved to be much more difficult for Walker and Coffee than putting the finishing touches to a natural setting. Edward Ward, one of the commissioners who had large land holdings in the county, led a forceful fight to prevent the acceptance of Coffee's plan. Not only did Ward use his eloquent oratory in the closed sessions of the commission, but he also spoke publicly to the populace. Finally on July 5, 1810, a majority of the commissioners voted to make Huntsville, henceforth to be called Twickenham, the county seat.

According to the terms of the agreement, the proprietors agreed to sell thirty acres in the southern part of town to the commissioners for \$23.50 an acre, the exact amount paid by them for the tract. There was obviously a swap-out in the transaction by which the proprietors retained the southern part of the square containing the Big Spring and the commissioners received the northern part of the Public Square. The town was guaranteed the use of the spring waters, but no dams or machinery could be erected that might endanger the purity of the water. Special provision was also made whereby the proprietors were to receive lots in the southern part of the town to compensate them for the acreage contained in the streets, not included in the thirty-acre purchase. At first two lots were reserved for this purpose, but when the final deed was drawn, four lots were transferred because it was found that the streets in the commissioners' part of town contained a little more than three acres. little more than three acres.

When the first contract was drawn, only one-fourth of the purchase price of the land had been paid. Consequently, it was not until the final payment was made on February 3, 1815, that a patent was issued to Pope for the southwest quarter of section thirty-six, township three, range one west on which Huntsville was situated. In the meantime he had been successful in purchasing the interests of the other proprietors, and when the deed to the town was drawn up on September 1, 1815, Pope and his wife were the only grantors who signed the transfer.

Names:

Coffee,

Pope,

Walker,

Ward, Edward

**Places:** 

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

Image 20 r04b04-09-000-0087 Contents Index About

Ma Co. 484 Court House

On the evening of July 5, 1810, both the proprietors and the commissioners opened their lots for sale. Coffee and Walker disposed of only four while the commissioner sold twenty-four. The total sale netted around \$8,000, with lots selling from \$100 to \$750 each. In reporting this transaction to James Jackson and W. P. Anderson, Coffee stated that he and Walker had decided to postpone the sale of the rest of their lots to a future date when they would sell at higher prices and thus insure greater returns from their Huntsville "speculation."

Louis Winston, in a letter to Governor Holmes from Twickenham, September 23, 1810, reported that Colonels Pope and Bibb, and their friends from Georgia had all arrived in the county. In describing the populace, he wrote, We have a fine society; Virginians are flocking to this delightful country.

Twickenham was never a popular name with the people living in the county seat, for they had grown accustomed to the use of Huntsville. This question became a political issue and resulted in a special territorial act on November 25, 1811, which changed the official name of the town to Huntsville. Two weeks later, on December 9, an act of incorporation was passed, thus giving the town a charter and a government.

At the time of its incorporation, Huntsville had all the signs of becoming a thriving commercial center in the heart of a rich agricultural area. The squatter population in 1809 had numbered some three hundred, and to this group had been added a number of merchants, millers, clerks, distillers, mechanics, lawyers, doctors, and planters. Many of these people had been leaders in the states from whence they migrated; others, young men trained in law or medicine, had migrated to the frontier where advancement would perhaps be more rapid.

According to the territorial act which empowered the commissioners to create a county seat and erect public buildings, the courts were directed to occupy the courthouse as soon as it was fit for the reception of the courts of said county. By November 1811, the first courthouse had been completed to the point that its courtroom could be used for the fall term of Superior Court.

The two-story brick structure on the highest part of the Public Square faced south. At first only the lower story was completed to house the county officials and the courts. The basement portion which opened on the north was apparently used for a public market place. On the northeast corner of the Public Square a small wooden jail with pillory was constructed to care for public offenders. During this early period the courthouse served as a meeting place for both civic and religious groups, and the Public Square became the hub of commercial activity as stores were constructed on all sides of it.

#### Names:

Anderson, William P. Bibb, Colonel Coffee,

#### Places:

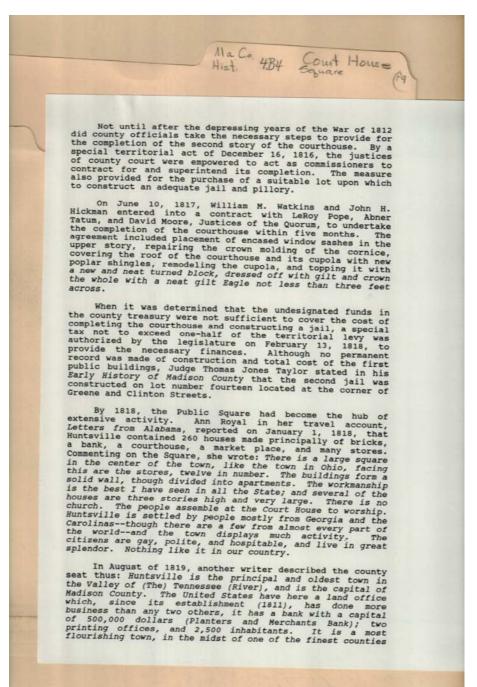
Madison County, AL

#### **Types:**

essay

Holmes, David, Governor Jackson, James Pope, Colonel Walker, Winston, Louis

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#### Names:

Hickman, John H. Moore, David Pope, LeRoy

Places:

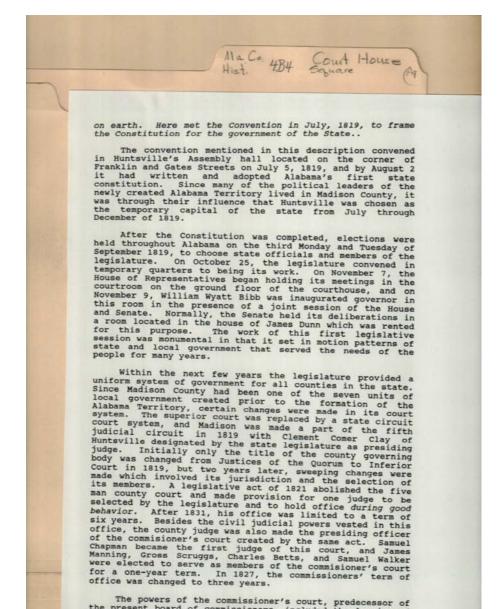
Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

essay

Royal, Ann Tatum, Abner Taylor, Thomas Jones, Judge Watkins, William M. Early History of Madison County

Image 22 r04b04-09-000-0089 Contents Index About



The powers of the commissioner's court, predecessor of the present board of commissioners, included the levying of such general and special taxes as were necessary to maintain county government, controlling the property and finances of

Names:

Bibb, William Wyatt

Clay, Clement Comer

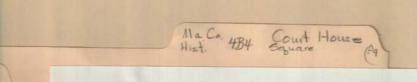
Dunn, James

Places:

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

Image 23 r04b04-09-000-0090 Contents Index About



the county, constructing and maintaining roads, and appointing certain officials as directed by law.

By 1830, the roster of county offices included commissioners of roads and revenue, county and orphans' court, circuit court, justice of the peace, notary public, circuit solicitor, sheriff, coroner, constable, tax assessor and collector, treasurer, county auctioneer, road apportioner and overseer, overseer of the poor, and county surveyor. This increase in the number of local officials is but one indication of the rapid growth of the county during its formative period.

The federal census figures for Madison County in 1820 showed a population of 17,481 almost evenly divided between whites and slaves, but by 1830 this figure had risen to 27,990 with the slave population making up fifty-three per cent of the total. A further analysis of the Alabama census shows that Madison County continued to hold first place in population and wealth in the state.

Amid the prosperous years of the early 1830's, the commissioner's court made plans to build an imposing new courthouse to accommodate the needs of an expanding government and to grace the center of what was considered to be one of the most beautiful towns in the South. A special legislative act, passed on January 10, 1835, empowered the Madison commissioners to levy a tax for the purpose of defraying the expense involved in building a new courthouse in the town of Huntsville.

Meanwhile George Steele and Thomas and William Brandon, local architects and builders, were asked to submit proposed plans for the design and cost of the structure. On August 29, 1835, the commissioner's court adopted the plans drawn up by George Steele, and a committee was appointed to seek proposals from contractors who would undertake its construction. Advertisements for bids were placed in the Huntsville and Nashville papers, but none was forthcoming that was acceptable to the commissioner's court. Because immediate funds were needed in order to let a contract prior to the time that tax funds were made available, the county officials asked the state legislature to empower them to borrow \$12,000 from the Branch Bank of Alabama located in Huntsville.

The next attempt to secure bids for construction of the new courthouse bore fruit. Dr. Thomas Fearn and James I. Donegan, prominent businessmen of Huntsville, were selected by the commissioners to receive proposals on or before December 1, 1836, and to let a contract for a building to be constructed in accordance with George Steele's plan. They also were directed to superintend the same in every manner and respect. Early in 1837, the firm of Mitchell and Wilson was employed to construct a two-story stone and brick building with a dome on top and a full basement beneath at an approximate cost of \$31,000.

The building of Stephen S. Ewing located on the Public Square was rented to serve as a courtroom and county clerk's

#### Names:

Brandon, Thomas Brandon, William

Places:

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

essay

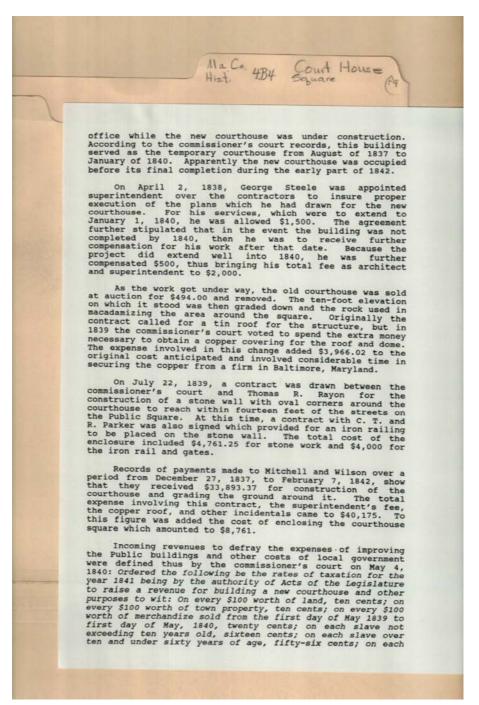
Donegan, James I. Ewing, Stephen S.

Fearn, Thomas, Dr.

Steele, George Architect

Madison County Courthouses Paper - Madison County Buildings

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Names:

Mitchell, Parker, C. T.

Places:

Madison County, AL

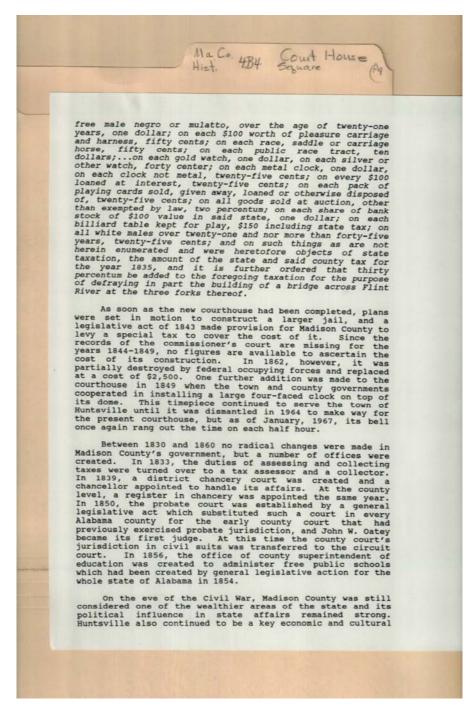
**Types:** 

essay

Parker, R. Rayon, Thomas R.

Steele, George, Architect Wilson,

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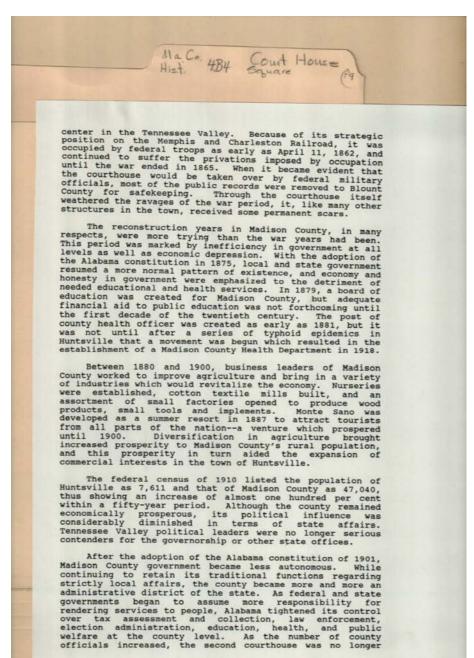


Places:

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

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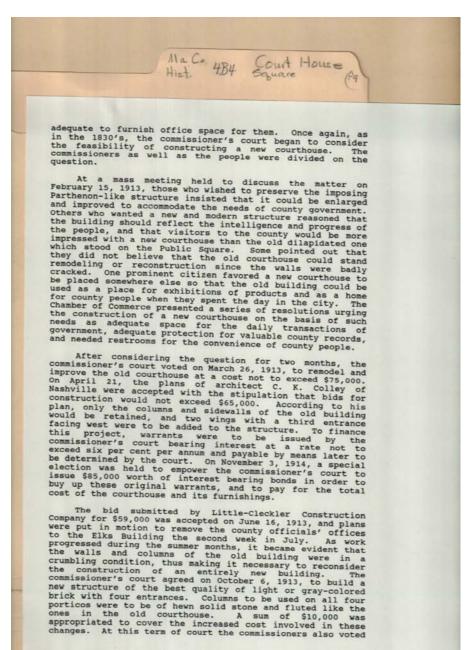


Places:

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

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Names:

Colley, C. K., Architect

Places:

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

essay

Little-Cleckler Construction Co.

Image 28 r04b04-09-000-0095 Contents Index About

Ma Co. 4B4 Court House

to accept the offer of the custodian of the United States Court Building to allow the various county courts use of this facility while the courthouse was being constructed.

Work progressed on schedule, and by April 22, 1914, a contract was let with the Art Metal Construction Company to supply the furnishings for the courthouse at a cost of \$12,522.18. By mid-August Little-Cleckler Construction Company had finished their work and plans were made to dedicate the building on September 10, 1914.

on September 9, the Huntsville Mercury Banner announced the forthcoming event and took occasion to comment on the courthouse which had recently been torn down... The old building was designed after the Greek Parthenon. It had a great history, and could its old walls have spoken they could have told of the oratory and eloquence of great lawyers, distinguished Congressmen, famous Senators in Congress and Presidents of the Republic. But, like all things of earth, having served its purpose and lived out its years of usefulness it passed away to make room for the new, larger, and better suited structure for the present day demands. May it (the new one) do so long and well as the old. The cornerstone will be laid at 11:00 o'clock on September 10, 1914 by the Masonic Lodge of Alabama. Everyone in Madison County is invited. Refreshments will be served and several speeches will be made.

The crowd that came to view the new courthouse found it generally acceptable. The town clock encased in its new home, the old iron fence, and the massive Doric columns supporting all four entrances helped to placate the feelings of those who had been the most severe critics of change. The Confederate Soldier, a memorial to the confederate dead, placed on the west lawn by the U.D.C. in 1905 and the D.A.R. plaque containing a roll of Revolutionary soldiers buried in Madison County placed at the north entrance also remained to lend further evidence that all was not changed amid the rush of economic progress.

Late in 1914, the herd of pet deer which had lived on the courthouse lawn was transferred to the McCormick estate on Meridian Street, but the iron fence continued to serve as hitching posts around the Public Square for some years. After a heated argument concerning its removal, it was finally taken down in 1921 and a heavy iron chain put in its place. When it was discovered that the Big Spring, the town's main water supply, was being polluted by manure seepage from the hitching area around the Public Square, the commissioner's court had to take action in spite of the protests of those who hated to see the old landmark go.

Amid the economic expansion engendered by World War I and the boom period of the 1920's, the county government increased its activities as an administrative agent of the state. In 1911 the office of farm agent was created and in 1915 the position of home demonstration agent was added to farm extension service in Madison County. A license inspector was appointed in 1919 and in 1923 the Board of Review, later call the Board of Equalization, was

#### Names:

Art Metal Construction Co.

Places:

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

essay

Little-Cleckler Construction Co.

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Ma Co. 4B4 Court House

established on a permanent basis. In 1923, the board of county commissioners replaced the board of revenue which had replaced the old commissioner's court in 1919. A county court which combined the offices of a number of justices of the peace was initiated in 1911, and a circuit court for the individual county of Madison was created as the twenty-third judicial circuit of the state of Alabama in 1931. With the coming of the depression in 1929, the need for the expansion of welfare led to the permanent establishment of a Department of Welfare in 1935 which later became known as the Department of Pensions and Securities.

By 1937, the courthouse had again become inadequate to house the daily activities of county government and the Elks Building on Eustis Street was acquired to relieve the situation. Extensive renovation of the courthouse in 1940 brought some relief but not enough to take care of the needs of an expanding population.

With the advent of the Tennessee Valley Authority, created by act of Congress in 1933, the potential for great economic expansion in Madison County, as well as the whole valley, soon became apparent. The varied TVA programs resulting in more adequate flood control, improved water transportation, better land utilization, and the production of abundant hydroelectric power, did much to aid the valley's recovery from the depression years of the 1930's.

Between 1940 and 1966 Madison County experienced the largest population growth in its history. In 1941, just before the outbreak of World War II, the federal government made plans to place two large installations just south of the city of Huntsville. The Chemical Warfare Service built a chemical manufacturing plant on a site which became the Huntsville Arsenal, and the Ordnance Department constructed a shell loading plant close by at Redstone Arsenal. As the end of the war approached, the work force at these two installations had grown to 20,000. Shortly after V-J Day on September 2, 1945, all production facilities were placed on standby. Not until June 1, 1949, when Redstone Arsenal was reactivated to fulfill a new mission for the Ordnance growth of the county's economy. With the transfer of a small group of German missile experts to Huntsville in 1950, were combined to form the Redstone Arsenal complex which, by development, and training for missile and space which, by development, and training for missile and space vehicle Plight Center and the various United States Army missile payroll of more than \$200 million. The total yearly of more than \$460 million and the annual agricultural income stood at a figure in excess of \$23 million.

Census reports also reflected the extent of Madison County's growth. In 1950, its official population stood at 72,903; in 1960 at 117,348; and in September 1964 at 173,284. The dramatic jump in Huntsville's population from

Names:

Huntsville Arsenal

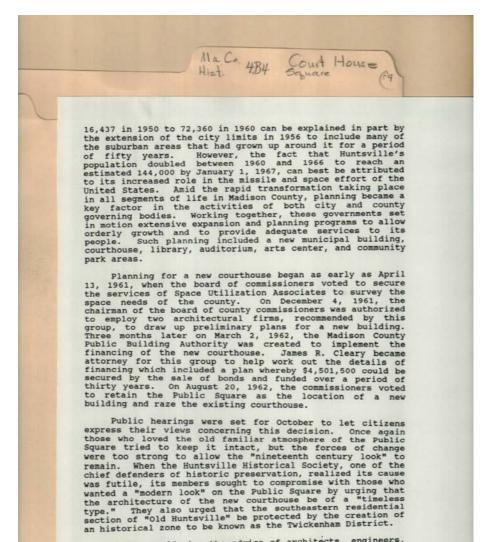
TVA

Places:

Madison County, AL

Types:

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After considering the advice of architects, engineers, and geologists concerning the suitability of the Public Square for a multi-story structure, the commissioners decided on December 3, 1962, to move ahead with plans to build on the original courthouse site. At this time, architects Loyd Kranert and Thomas Jones were authorized to submit preliminary plans for the building and on December 20, 1963, these drawings were approved. The annex on Gallatin Street which had housed the educational programs of the First Baptist Church before it moved to Governors Drive was rented for use as a temporary courthouse, and county officials moved their offices to this location on August 20,

Names:

Cleary, James R.

Jones, Thomas, architect

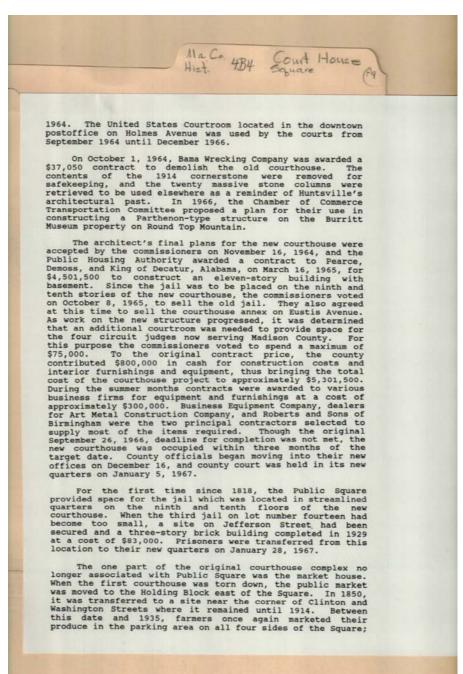
Kranert, Loyd, architect

**Places:** 

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

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Names:

Bama Wrecking Company

Places:

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

essay

Pearce, Demoss, and King

Roberts and Sons

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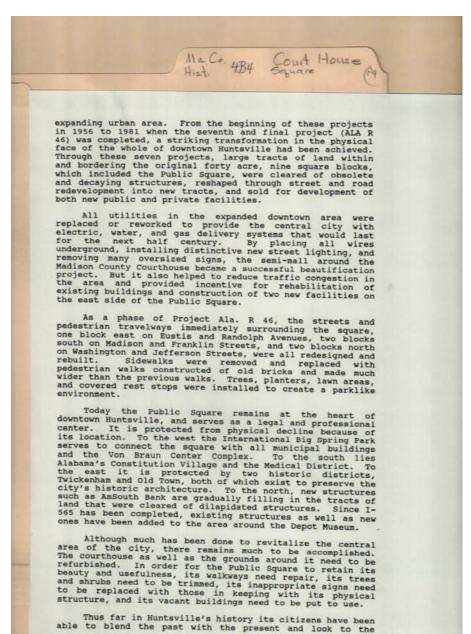
Ma Co. 4B4 Court House Hist. 4B4 Equare but in 1935, the county furnished farmers a covered market house near the Big Spring branch directly across from the present City Utilities Building. In 1963 this facility was moved to Cook Avenue, N.W. to make way for the relocation of a portion of Gallatin Street in the Heart of Huntsville Although the courthouse lawn was newly landscaped in 1966, the historic markers and monuments were returned to their places to remind people of their heritage. Temporarily missing from his pedestal was the old confederal soldier who was undergoing repair after losing a battle with a demolition squad employed by the Huntsville Housing Authority. As the last brick wall on Cotton Row came thundering down, the crew accidently let it crush the soldier as he stood on the lawn of the First National Bank awaiting his transfer back to his station on the Public Square. Square. Dedication of the fourth courthouse was set for March 5, 1967. At this time the cornerstone, containing items selected by the Huntsville Historical Society, was laid, speeches made, and refreshments served just as in September of 1914. Following the ceremonies, citizens of Madison County inspected their newest "Temple of Justice' located on the same Public Square that still served as the seat of county government for which it and the town of Twickenham, now Huntsville, had been created on July 5, 1810. Today the Public Square has become largely a legal, financial, and professional center, and plans of the Central City Project will bring a further transformation of the area in addition to the revitalization activities envisioned for the downtown business district, plans in this project include the construction of nine multi-deck parking structures, a mall around the three sides of the Public Square, a modernized street system, an international Big Spring Park, and new downtown shopping areas. 1993 Update on the Public Square The new courthouse continued to house many of the functions of county government, but the other activities which had been carried on around the public square began to change, and in the next twenty-five years all of the retail stores located in the many shopping centers scattered throughout the city. Like many other cities, Huntsville became involved in urban renewal programs after World War II which allowed local governments to receive large amounts of federal money to aid them in rehabilitating most of the territory which lay within the city limits of Huntsville in 1950. The Housing Authority of the City of Huntsville undertook the responsibility for carrying out seven major projects which conserved, rehabilitated, and developed almost two square miles of land. (See accompanying map #\_\_\_.) These projects replaced blighted, substandard, and crime-ridden areas of the central city with a redesigned and rebuilt metropolitan area capable of serving the needs of rapidly

Places:

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

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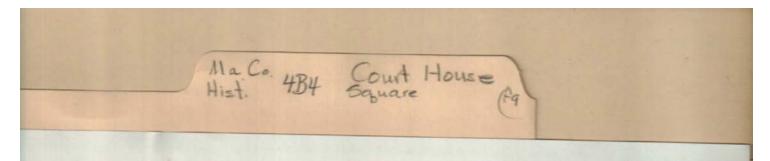
Places:

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

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future in such a way that the Public Square continues to be an important focal point in the city.

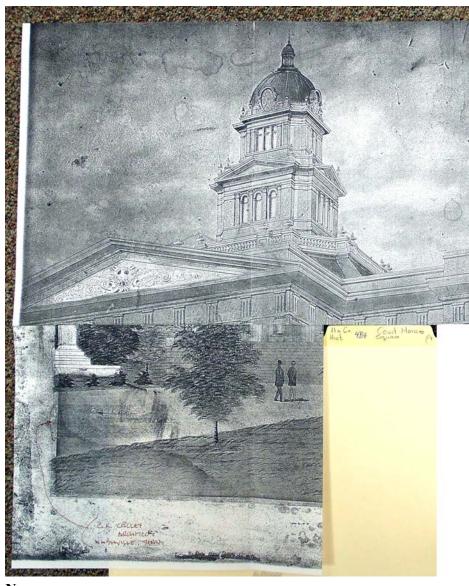
References: Space does not permit the listing of detailed end notes. The materials contained in this article were obtained from the following sources: Mississippi Territorial Records, Alabama Records, Madison County Records, City of Huntsville Records, published documents, and selected published works on state and local history.

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**Types:** 

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Names:

Courthouse Square

**Places:** 

Madison County, AL

**Types:** 

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**Collection Scope and Content:** The Collection of 114 Linear ft. includes a total of 156 Archival Boxes. The Frances Cabaniss Roberts collection covers the historical records of the Cabaniss Roberts family. This collection contains extensive correspondence records of the Cabaniss Roberts family circa 1830 to 1930.

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