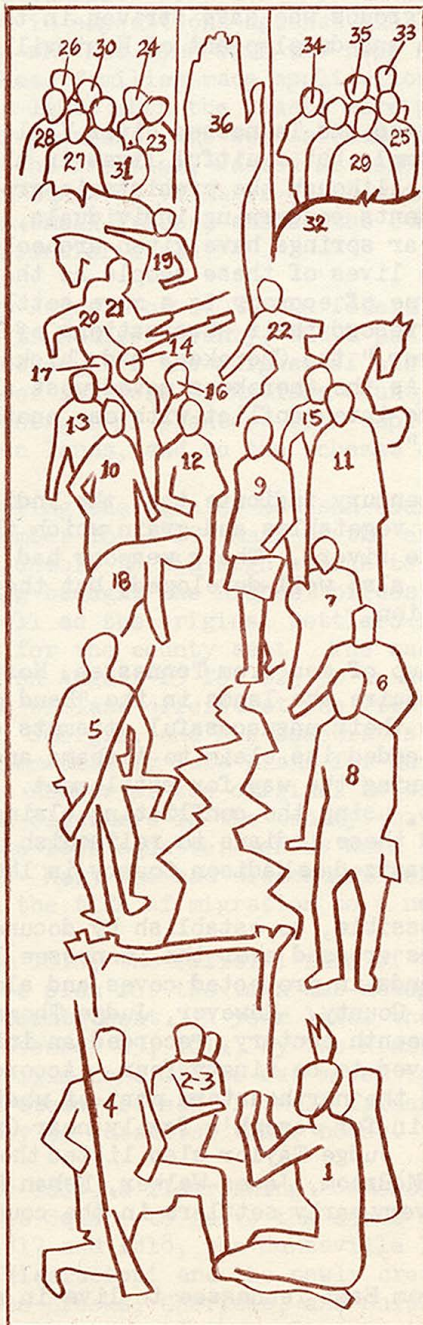


# THE MADISON COUNTY COURTHOUSE MURAL HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA



ARTISTS Norman Thomas  
C. E. Monroe, Jr.

MOSIACIST Ramon Sanchez

HISTORIAN Dr. Frances Roberts

- 1-4 Historic Indians
- 5-7 Earliest Settlers
- 8 John Hunt
- 9 LeRoy Pope
- 10 John Williams Walker
- 11 Clement Comer Clay
- 12 William Wyatt Bibb
- 13 Gabriel Moore
- 14 Reuben Chapman
- 15 Dr. Thomas Fearn
- 16 David Moore
- 17 Charles Patton
- 18 Slave Labor
- 19 Confederate Officer
- 20-21 Enlisted
- 22 Captain Gurley
- 23 Judge Wm. Richardson
- 24 Henry Chase
- 25 Dan C. Monroe
- 26 Samuel R. Butler
- 27 William H. Council
- 28 Fannie Cabaniss
- 29 Judge Thomas Jones
- 30 Martha Patton Darwin
- 31 Howard Weeden
- 32 Dr. Carl Grote
- 33 United States Military
- 34 Wernher von Braun
- 35 Sen. John Sparkman
- 36 Hand



# HISTORICAL COMPOSITION OF THE MADISON COUNTY COURTHOUSE MURAL

It was the ancient prophet Isaiah who commanded, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn." And with this thought in mind, this historical mural has been created to depict many individuals as symbolic of groups who have striven in their separate ways to make possible the solid growth and development of Huntsville and Madison County.

For thousands of years before white men entered the Tennessee River Valley to claim it as their own, the Indians had lived simple but fruitful lives in the valley amid an abundance of natural resources. Although the prehistoric groups who lived here left no record of dramatic incidents concerning individuals, their village sites along the banks of streams and near springs have given archeologists and anthropologists much insight into the lives of these people as they moved from a hunting, fishing, and gathering-type of economy to a more settled agrarian life. By the time explorers began to record their observations of Indian life in the "Great Bend of the Tennessee River," the Cherokees and Chickasaws were both settled in the area. \*(1, 2, 3, 4) As the Cherokees moved west along the Tennessee and the Chickasaws east, they came into conflict with one another over who had the best claim to the "Great Bend."

Studies of village sites of the eighteenth century indicate that the Indians had begun to supplement their simple diets with vegetables and grain which they produced by cultivating the rich lands along the rivers. Their weapons had greatly improved and their arts and crafts were also well-developed, but they were still far behind the white man's civilization.

Shortly after the American Revolution, a group of men from Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia began to take steps to acquire the lands in the "Bend of the Tennessee," and for more than three decades their unsuccessful attempts continued. Finally in 1802, the state of Georgia ceded its claim to Alabama and Mississippi to the federal government, thus opening the way for settlement. In 1805 and 1807, agents of the federal government, using the conflicting claims of the Chickasaws and Cherokees as a wedge, forced these Indians to relinquish their titles to a triangular area which was organized as Madison County in 1808.

It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to establish by documentary evidence just when the first white settlers crossed over the Tennessee line and began to build log cabins on the fertile lands in protected coves and along the banks of Flint River in what is now Madison County. However, Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, local historian of the late nineteenth century, recorded an interview with Isaac Criner, pioneer settler, who lived to be ninety-four. According to Criner, he and his brother, Joseph, explored the northeastern part of what is now Madison County in 1804, and built a log cabin for Joseph's family near Criner's Spring on the Mountain Fork of Flint River. Judge Taylor also listed the families of Samuel Davis, Stephen McBroom, Thomas McBroom, James Walker, Leban Rice, John McCartney, Levi Hinds, and John Grayson as very early settlers in the county. (5, 6, 7)

In 1805, John Hunt (8) brought his family from East Tennessee to live in a log

\* Numbers in text refer to numbered diagram of mural.



cabin near a big spring that soon came to be known as Hunt's Spring. Other families joined him, and within four years a squatter settlement known as Huntsville had grown up around the spring.

From 1804 to 1809, the influx of settlers into the county was very rapid. Since many people in the older settled areas had some knowledge of the rich lands in the "Great Bend of the Tennessee," frontier settlers who were natives of Virginia and North Carolina soon migrated to the area from the borders of civilization in eastern and Middle Tennessee and Western Georgia. The heads of many of these families were men who had fought in the American Revolution and participated in expeditions against the Indians. They were men of small to moderate means who had come with the hope of acquiring rich land cheaply. More than 300 of these families made application to the federal government in 1808 to buy their lands when the tracts were placed on sale at a public land office. These hardy pioneers, who were already accustomed to carving out a civilized society from the frontier, wasted no time in establishing a settled pattern of living. Seven squatter villages emerged in various parts of the county. People worshipped in small groups, shared the concerns of daily life, and administered justice in "frontier style."

By August of 1809, the federal surveyor, Thomas Freeman, had completed his work in Madison County, and a public land office had been located in Nashville, Tennessee, for the purpose of auctioning these surveyed lands. What many of the pioneer settlers of Madison County did not foresee was their vulnerability to the designs of planters with capital from older states, who were seeking fertile cotton lands, and to the schemes of land speculators.

During the sale of Madison County lands which began on August 7 and ended on September 16, 1809, many of the original settlers were disappointed because they were unable to bid high enough to purchase their homesteads. Land around Hunt's Spring brought the highest prices, for it was evident that the land speculators as well as the original settlers recognized the settlement as the logical location for the county seat. The quarter section containing the Big Spring was sold on August 25 for \$23.50 an acre--almost four times the price of any other piece of land offered at the first sale. LeRoy Pope (1765-1844) (9) of Petersburg, Georgia, and his associates from Nashville, Tennessee, secured this site, and immediately laid plans for having it chosen as the county seat. John Hunt and a number of the original settlers at Hunt's Spring bought less expensive lands elsewhere in the county, but only forty-three percent of those enumerated in the 1808 squatter census were listed as land owners in the tax returns of 1815. Many who had dreamed of securing rich land at a low price had moved on with the tide of migration to a new frontier.

In 1810, the official name of the settlement became Twickenham, as LeRoy Pope's plan for the town was accepted by the commissioners appointed to choose the county seat. A year later the town was renamed Huntsville and incorporated on November 25, 1811, by the Mississippi Territorial Legislature. In 1811, the Nashville Land Office was moved to Huntsville, and the sale of land continued, as a steady stream of small farmers and planters made their way to Madison County to establish their homes.

By 1818, a flourishing commercial area had developed around the town's Public Square to serve the needs of those engaged in agricultural pursuits. In 1817 and 1818, the Huntsville land office sold most of the lands in northern Mississippi and the newly created Alabama Territory which had been ceded by the Creeks, Cherokees, and Chickasaws. The town was crowded with people from all parts of the nation as they came to invest in town sites and farms in the Tennessee Valley.



Huntsville served as the temporary capital of Alabama from July 2 to December 17, 1819. Here, John Williams Walker (1783-1823) (10) served as president of the first Constitutional Convention, Clement Comer Clay (1789-1866) (11) chaired the committee which drafted the document, and William Wyatt Bibb (1781-1820) (12) was inaugurated Alabama's first state governor at the courthouse on November 9, 1819. His brother, Thomas Bibb, prominent in the early development of Madison County, later succeeded him as governor in 1820.

Madison County also furnished a large number of political leaders who were important in local, state and national government in the period from 1819 to 1860. Walker became one of Alabama's first United States Senators, and four of his sons later served in state and national government. His living descendants still contribute to the development of Huntsville and Madison County, and a great, great grandson is presently serving as a Congressman from Missouri. Clay later served as a legislator, congressman, governor and United States Senator. One of his sons, Clement Claiborne Clay followed in his footsteps as United States Senator while another son, J. Withers Clay edited "The Democrat," a local newspaper, for more than forty years. Gabriel Moore (1785-1845) (13) held the office of tax assessor, territorial representative, state speaker of the house of representatives, congressman, governor, and United States Senator from Alabama. Ruben Chapman (1799-1882) (14) younger brother of Samuel Chapman, first county judge, served as congressman, then governor of Alabama.

Other leaders emerged from the vrowd to aid the economic, civic, and cultural growth of Madison County. Among this group were Dr. Thomas Fearn (1789-1863) (15), Dr. David Moore (1789-1845) (16), and Dr. Charles Patton (1806-1866) (17). They and other like them, helped to establish and maintain an economic base for fruitful living. They used their resources, over and above the call of duty, to help build churches, schools, theaters, libraries, lecture halls, and parks. They helped to maintain community government to protect life and property and to render services which individuals could not finance. Descendants of many of these men still form an important segment of the leadership in Huntsville and Madison County today.

The old saying that "many good works are known only to God" can be applied to countless thousands who aided in the development of Madison County through the years. The slave labor force (18) which numbered more than half of the population in 1860 contributed its share to the agricultural production of the county. Farmers and planters contributed their efforts to make the economy prosper during the ante-bellum period. Skilled craftsmen and builders such as George Steele and Thomas and William Brandon created beautiful structures which have endured to the present time. Outstanding ministers, lawyers, judges, and scholars of Madison County spread their influence far beyond its boundaries.

When the War between the States broke out in 1861, the county furnished its share of officers (19) and enlisted men (20, 21) who fought for "The Cause." One of the most colorful figures of this period was Captain Frank Gurley (1834-1920) (22) who not only survived many narrow escapes, but also kept alive the spirit of those who fought for the Confederacy for many years after the war. The county also furnished leaders who opposed secession and sought to reunite the South with the United States.

The reconstruction period from 1865 to 1875 was a very difficult time for the people of Madison County. Faced with the problems which accompany inefficient government and economic depression, the county's leaders began to explore new avenues of economic endeavor. With the return to more normal times in the late 1870's, the citizens of Madison County took a more active interest in state and national affairs, but few of them became successful candidates for state and



national office. The only notable exception during the period from 1865 to 1937 was Judge William Richardson (1839-1914) (23) who served as Congressman from the Eighth District from 1899 until his death in 1914.

Between 1880 and 1900, business leaders worked to revitalize the economy by improving agriculture and encouraging a variety of industries. Nurseries were established, cotton textile mills built, and numbers of small factories opened to produce wood products, small tools, and implements. Monte Sano was developed as a summer resort and people were encouraged to build summer homes on the "Mountain of Health." Diversification of agriculture brought increased wealth to the county's rural population, and this prosperity in turn helped the growth of commercial interests in the towns. New banks were chartered, railroads built, and roads improved. Typical of this generation were business and civic leaders such as Henry B. Chase (1870-1962) (24) and Dan C. Monroe (1869-1957) (25). Not only was Chase president of Chase Nursery for many years, but he also served as mayor of Huntsville without pay and gave his support to churches, schools, city beautification, and historic preservation for more than seventy years. Monroe, who operated a number of businesses including a music store and a printing company, gave much of his time to organizing musical groups and initiating other cultural activities for Huntsville and Madison County.

In the field of education, Samuel R. Butler (1868-1947) (26) and William H. Council (1848-1909) (27) were among those who provided leadership in the development of public schools. Butler gave his whole life to the improvement of public education in Huntsville and Madison County. Council, an outstanding leader in the Negro community, was largely responsible for the founding of Alabama A. and M. College, and served as its first president. His work and that of Dr. J. F. Drake resulted in the development of a four-year, state-supported college for Negroes in Madison County.

Of the many who served ably in the offices of county government during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Fannie Shepherd Cabaniss (1855-1937) (28) and Judge Thomas W. Jones (1876-1958) (29) are outstanding for their long and faithful service to the people of Madison County. Miss Cabaniss worked with her father, the first register in chancery, until his death, and continued to serve in this office for forty-two years longer. Trained in the field of law, she was a guide and counselor for many people including three generations of young lawyers. Judge Jones spent most of his adult life in the probate office. The grandson of Probate Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, he began his work as a clerk in the court at an early age and then served as probate judge for thirty years until his retirement in 1952.

The role played by women in Madison County's history has been largely that of homemaker and guide for the men who assumed leadership in all aspects of group life. But Martha Patton Darwin (1876-1966) (30) and Howard Weeden (1847-1905) (31) are worthy of mention for special reasons. Mrs. Darwin, wife of Dr. James Darwin and mother of three children, found time to render outstanding service as librarian of the Huntsville Public Library from 1917 to 1940. Miss Weeden, on the other hand, devoted her whole life to preserving "Gems of the Old South" through the media of art and poetry.

Dr. Carl Grote (1887-1964) (32) the first full-time public health officer in Madison County, was also influential in the development of public hospital facilities. His work, together with that of many dedicated physicians and dentists, has resulted in the emergence of Huntsville as a well-recognized medical center in the south.

During the twentieth century, Madison County, along with the state and nation,



experienced many changes. The growth of rapid means of transportation and communication and the development of cheap electrical power by the Tennessee Valley Authority helped to improve rural agricultural economy and link it with urban industrial life. Commercial areas in the smaller towns lost much of their business to Huntsville when it began to emerge as one of the larger cities of Alabama.

Madison County's contribution to the wars of the twentieth century included many officers of high rank as well as thousands of enlisted men. Among this group were several whose bravery has merited the nation's highest award-the Congressional Medal of Honor. (33)

During World War II, a tract of 40,000 acres of farm land south of Huntsville was purchased by the federal government as a site for two large arsenals. The operation of these installations caused a modest influx of people into Madison County. Between 1940 and 1950 the population increased from 66,317 to 72,903. When the two arsenals were combined in 1950 and redeveloped as Redstone Arsenal, the center for guided missile and rocket research, an even larger influx resulted. By January of 1967, the population of Huntsville had risen to an estimated 144,000 people and that of Madison County to 194,000.

Dr. Wernher von Braun (1912- ) (34), Director of the George C. Marshall Space Flight Center since its creation by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in 1960, has been a key figure in the missile and space vehicle programs of the United States. He and members of his team as well as other leaders in the Redstone Arsenal complex, have contributed much to the enrichment of economic, social, and cultural life in the county.

In recent years the political leadership of Madison County has once again emerged in state and national affairs. Representative of this group is Senator John Sparkman (1899- ) (35) who has served in the Congress of the United States since 1937. After completing five terms in the House of Representatives, he was elected to the post of United States Senator from Alabama in 1946, a position which he currently holds.

Today the people of Madison County are still on the move toward high goals. As in years past, many of its leaders are rendering services over and above the call of duty in order to keep Madison County a place where all groups can enjoy purposeful living, realizing that a successful future depends upon harmonious utilization of natural and human resources. (36)

Frances C. Roberts

MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

James Record, Chairman  
Dudley Clark  
Edwin Jones  
James Bell  
Lawrence Cobb

Reprinted 1969

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the state of Alabama  
from

"Dedication, Madison County Courthouse 1967 A. D."

by

The Tennessee Valley Genealogical Society, Inc.

P. O. Box 1512

Huntsville, Alabama 35807

on the occasion of  
the 150th anniversary  
of the state of Alabama

VALLEY LEAVES, a special edition  
December 1969  
(October mailing anticipated)

Over 100 pages devoted to Madison County, the first North Alabama county  
Indexed  
\$3.00

Contains:

- \*Madison County, Alabama Map showing original boundary
- \*"The Public Square in Madison County History," by Dr. Frances Roberts
- \*Madison County, Mississippi Territory Appointments, 1808-1817
- \*Madison County, Alabama Territory and State Appointments, 1818-1822
- \*Deed of Trust, Madison County, 1820 (listing of many early pioneers)
- \*Reprint of a history of Madison County written by Thomas Jones Taylor  
in the 1880's about Madison County from 1820-1840

A welcome addition to your library.  
A valuable aid to genealogists and historians.  
A thoughtful Christmas gift.

Published by The Tennessee Valley Genealogical Society, Inc.  
(VALLEY LEAVES is a regular quarterly publication of TVGS. This, however,  
is a Special Edition and is complete in itself.)

.....  
The Tennessee Valley Genealogical Society, Inc.  
P. O. Box 1512  
Huntsville, Alabama 35807

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the December Special Edition of VALLEY  
LEAVES at the prepaid cost of \$3.00 each to:

(name) \_\_\_\_\_

(address) \_\_\_\_\_

(city) \_\_\_\_\_ (state) \_\_\_\_\_ (zip) \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_