

HUNTSVILLE- MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESERVING THE PAST TO ENRICH THE FUTURE

Spring Newsletter

COLLECTING, PRESERVING, RECORDING AND PROMOTING HISTORY SINCE 1951

Spring 2020

NEW YEAR NEWS

Julian Butler, chairman of the Alabama Bicentennial Committee Chairman, presented a fascinating program at our December 8, 2019 meeting. Just six days before our official 200th birthday, it seemed appropriate to have birthday cake to commemorate. Julian talked about the signers of the first constitution which was written in Huntsville, the Provisional Capital of Alabama in 1819. This program capped two and a half years of celebrations leading to Alabama's birthday, December 14, 1819.



Julian Butler

In other news, board member Dr. Deane Dayton was named as recipient of the Ranee' Pruitt Award for his outstanding dedication and work in preserving and promoting local history. Dr. Dayton maintains a website with an incredible amount of historical information that is now available to everyone. Past President Jacque

Reeves presented the award to Dr. Dayton and emphasized that credit also goes to Carol Dayton for her work in researching local history as well. Dr. Dayton's contributions are immeasurable!



*Dr. Deane Dayton, Jacque Reeves
(Photo courtesy Sam Tumminello)*

President David Hitt called for a vote to establish a new slate of officers for the 2020-2022 term. David has served for two and a half years, and it seems fitting that he finished his term with the culmination of our bicentennial birthday. David has been an outstanding and pro-active leader of the Historical Society and he reminded members that while our mission is to preserve the past, we must look toward the future to ensure our society is intact in years to

come in order to continue our mission. Thank you, David, for your service to the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society!



Past President, David Hitt

2020-2022 OFFICERS

The membership approved of the following officers: President – Blake Dorning; Vice President – Arley McCormick; 2nd Vice President – Heather Atkins; Treasurer – Wayne Smith; Recording Secretary – Sharon Lang; Corresponding Secretary – Shalis Worthy; Archivist – Deane Dayton; HOPE Coordinators: Dakota Cotton and Shalis Worthy; Editor, Historical Review – Arley McCormick; Marker Committee Chair – Alex Luttrell; Board members: Dakota Cotton, Sam Tumminello, William Hampton, Deane Dayton and past presidents: David Hitt, Ron Bledsoe, Joyce Smith, Gary Wicks, Jacque Reeves, and John Allen.

Our new president of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, Blake Dorning, is the former Sheriff of Madison County and well-known in the historical community for his

portrayals in various venues of local historical figures and for his popularity as a speaker for many organizations. Sheriff Dorning started working in the sheriff's office in 1983 when he was 21-years-old. He retired from the department in 2019 after 16 years as sheriff. Blake is a native of Huntsville and is married to Jan Dorning, who is also a well-known member of many local charitable committees. We welcome Sheriff Dorning as our president and expect better behavior at our future meetings!



Blake Dorning, new president of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

Our next meeting is **Sunday, March 8 at 2:00 p.m.** in the auditorium in the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library. Our speaker is **Probate Judge Frank Barger** who will share with us some interesting history of the office of Probate Judge as well as colorful stories from the past.

Judge Barger has been in office since January 2019 and before that, he served as a senior staff member of Judge Tommy Ragland and as Madison County's Elections Administrator. He has personally handled over 1,000 cases including

wills and administrations, adoptions, mental health commitments, guardianships and conservatorships, and issues of eminent domain.

Before work in the Probate Court system Judge Barager served as a non-profit executive – raising and directing community resources and leveraging state and federal funding to invest in programs that promoted education, served the elderly, children, mentally ill, and other at-risk populations.

Judge Barger has focused on tackling the mental health crisis by developing a model court for involuntary commitments, implementing procedures to protect our seniors and children, and safeguarding secure and transparent elections. He is also working to ensure citizens of Madison County receive top-notch customer service that includes well-trained staff and implementation of current technology. While focused on strategic direction of the Probate Court Barger presided over more than 1,200 hearings in 2019.

He is a recognized leader among the Probate Court system throughout the state serving as a member of the Alabama Secretary of State's Advisory Committee and Board Member for the Alabama Chapter of the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI). He also serves on the Legislative, Conference, Mental Health, Education, Election, and Communication Committees for the Alabama Probate Judge's Association. He is frequently called upon by legislators, elected officials, and other community leaders for input on matters that affect not only Madison County but the entire state.

Frank is a proud son of North Alabama - his maternal family goes back eight generations in Madison County. He is married to Jennifer Roberson Barger and they have one son, Grant. They reside in South Huntsville and are active members of Latham United Methodist Church where Frank serves as Administrative Board Chairman.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

It's the beginning of a new year, and you know what that means – if you haven't already sent in a check for your dues, please do so as soon as possible. Your annual dues enable us to pay for publication of our twice annual "Historical Huntsville Review" as well as our newsletters, stipends to our speakers, and whatever is needed for restoration of our aging markers and various other supplies. We appreciate your membership and hope you enjoy our programs. From the number of attendees at each meeting, we assume you do! **Please mail your check for \$35, made out to Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society (or just HMCHS) and send it to P.O. Box 666, Huntsville, Alabama, 35804. Thank you!**

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at Huntsville-Madison
County Historical Society

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