

Foundation Forum

Foundation Forum and Historic Huntsville Foundation Newsletter

Honoring Alice Boarman Baldridge

A Kaleidoscope of American History

Alice would not be denied. As Madison County's first female elected official, first female attorney, elected official who pushed for better education for all Madison County children, and a widowed mother who left Huntsville in 1922 to practice law at a Wall Street law firm, Alice had waited over one hundred years to have her legacy properly recognized. It would take more



HHF Chair Jerry Barclay, Council Member Dr. Jennie Robinson, Rep. Laura Hall, Mayor Tommy Battle, HHF Executive Director Donna Castellano with Baldridge family members Alicia Anderson, Dana Craig, Allie Craig, Tony Craig, and Cary Craig unveil Alice Boarman Baldridge's historic marker at 703 Adams Street.

Photo credit: Jeff White

than rain showers and gusty winds to ruin her big day. Miraculously, at the appointed time, the skies cleared long enough for family members, community leaders, elected officials, friends and neighbors to gather at the site of her former home and dedicate a historic marker for a woman who cut a swath through history.

How to honor a woman who opened doors for so many women? With an

Our preservation mission
discovers, documents,
shares, and preserves
the history and material
culture of HuntsvilleMadison County through
programs and projects that
include the contributions
of all Alabamians.
Supported by member
donations since 1974, our
nonprofit organization
promotes the preservation
of historically and
culturally significant places



through education, public

engagement, and advocacy.

A Homecoming for Alice

Moments make the event. We captured a few of the special moments from Alice's celebration to share with you and document the day.



Dr. Jan Davis with future changemakers Annie Reed and Vivian Heaps.

Rep. Laura Hall, Madison County's first Black woman elected to the Alabama House of Representatives, and HHF Board member

Tiavalya Befecadu.







Dr. and Mrs. Peter Yu own the property where Alice's family home once stood. They graciously allowed Alice's historic marker to be placed on their property.



Parks & Recreation

Judge Cleveland-Pennywell, Municipal Court Judge for the City of Huntsville, and Annie Reed.

The amazing team of Huntsville Parks & Recreation delivers another picture-perfect event set-up, including tents, chairs, and sound system.



Council member Bill Kling.



UAH president Dr. Chuck Karr and Jodie Karr chat with HHF Chair Jerry Barclay.

Continued from page 1

event that celebrated women who walked through those doors and opened doors for other women. Rep. Laura Hall, the first Black woman from Madison County elected to serve in the Alabama House of Representatives, placed Alice within the historical context of other transformational historical figures, such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth.

Praising Alice's intentionality to prepare herself through education and a commitment to excellence, Huntsville city council member Dr. Jennie Robinson spoke to the need to recruit more women to run for elected office. She stated: "We need women to run for elected office not because they are women, but because they are smart, engaged, and courageous."

Speakers noted the world Alice created by opening professional doors for women. Huntsville mayor Tommy Battle praised Alice as one of the stars who allowed Huntsville to become the star of Alabama. HHF Chair Jerry Barclay noted that since Alice broke the glass ceiling, women were now a dominant force in Huntsville's legal profession, as half of Madison County's attorneys are women. In recognition of Alice's contribution to American history, Dorla Evans, Chapter Regent of the Twickenham Town Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) presented Alice's family members with a certificate recognizing Alice's induction as a NSDAR woman of American history.

One of the most personal tributes came from Allison Craig, Alice's great-great-granddaughter, who spoke of Alice as fiercely loyal to her family. Noting all Alice's contributions, Allie stated, "It would be a disservice to remember Alice as only one thing--a speaker, a suffragist, or a lawyer. Instead, I like to think of her as a kaleidoscope, shifting and shedding light on all the unique experiences of a woman in her time."

Alice's marker is the fourth historic marker dedicated since May 2021 by the Historic Huntsville Foundation recognizing Huntsville women who made history. Huntsville's early suffrage movement is recognized with a marker at the YMCA on Greene Street. Huntsville's Black suffragists are recognized with a marker at William Hooper Council Memorial Park. Dr. Frances Roberts, Huntsville's pioneer historic preservationist, is recognized with a historic marker at her former Randolph Avenue home.

Editor's Note:

We are grateful to all Huntsville-Madison County public officials (past and present) who paid their respects to Alice Boarman Baldridge, including Judge Sybil Cleveland-Pennywell, Judge Laura Jo Hamilton, County Commission member Violet Edwards, City Council members Frances Akridge and Bill Kling, and Huntsville Board of Education member Andrea Alvarez. We were honored by the presence of Dr. Jan Davis, a Huntsville native, American astronaut and veteran of three space flights. The Historic Huntsville Foundation is grateful to Sue and John Shaver, who donated the funds for the Alice Boarman Baldridge historic marker.



HHF chair Jerry Barclay

The Historic Huntsville Foundation (HHF) has a big anniversary coming up. Actually, we have two big anniversaries coming up. Next year, May 2024, will mark fifty years of preservation for the Historic Huntsville Foundation since our 1974 incorporation, empowered to "acquire, hold, improve, sell, exchange, preserve and restore sites, buildings, residences and other structures" and to "increase knowledge and appreciation of such buildings, residences, and other structures."

Ten years later, in 1984, HHF acquired Harrison Brothers Hardware. When doubt swirled around the future Huntsville's downtown, HHF staked its mission on Harrison Brothers Hardware, fully confident that the future of downtown Huntsville was inseparable from the preservation and adaptive reuse of its historic structures.

Over these fifty years, we have seen a preservation movement once dismissed as "20th century nostalgia" become a central force in our city's economic and cultural development. When other community leaders argued that

From the Chairman - Happy Anniversary to Us!

downtown Huntsville needed "high quality contemporary buildings," our leaders argued that historic structures could be restored, renovated, and readapted to meet modern needs. When others argued Huntsville structures were neither historically nor architecturally significant, preservationists and scholars such as Harvie Jones, Sarah Huff Fisk, Dr. Frances Roberts, and Linda Bayer Allen crawled under buildings and dug through archives and county records to identify and document Huntsville-Madison County's historic structures so that Huntsvillians would know the legacy of the buildings whose fate we held in our hands.

So, how do we celebrate this legacy? How do we honor our past? How do we honor our founders? By continuing the work they started. When you look over this newsletter, you will see how our current generation of preservationists interpret and implement our mission. Our work to document the structures of Henderson and Daniel Brandon is consistent with HHF's work to document the buildings of George Steele.

The scholarship required to document the places where Huntsville women made history is the same as that required to identify the encampments of Andrew Jackson's army.

Our work to recognize Huntsville's space age historic neighborhoods and subdivisions created for Black residents during the Jim Crow era is grounded in the same impulse that led earlier preservationists to have the Twickenham, Old Town, and Five Points neighborhoods listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

One thing we all know about history is that it's constantly changing. The test of an organization is whether it can change to accommodate the times without straying from its essential values.

HHF has stood the test of time. We forward to celebrating 50 years of Preservation with old and new friends. And speaking of new friends, I am proud to introduce to you the new

members who have joined our Board of Directors in 2023. Tiavalya Befecadu, Joey Johnson, Alice Lanier, Lauren Martinson, Dan Maxwell, Tom Reidy, Beth Richardson, Emily Reiney, Dianne Reynolds, Bart Siniard, Drew Adan, and U'Meeka Smith have distinguished themselves through their community service, and they represent the perspectives and experiences needed to shape HHF's mission so that we remain true to our roots.



A snapshot of our HHF Class of 2023 Board of Directors.
Left to Right: Upper row: Tiavalya Befecadu and Lauren Martinson
Lower row: Bart Siniard, Beth Richardson, Alice Lanier, and U'Meeka Smith
Not pictured: Drew Adan, Joey Johnson, Dan Maxwell, Tom Reidy,
Emily Reiney, Dianne Reynolds.

Welcome Home

HHF members, community leaders gather to celebrate Henderson and Daniel Brandon

By: Laura Keigan

On an usually warm evening in February, Harrison Brothers Hardware became the site of a much-awaited introduction. The preview party for the Historic Huntsville Foundation's (HHF) third annual Rooted in History exhibition "Brick by Brick: The Legacy of Henderson and Daniel Brandon" brought attendees face to face (so to speak) with the father-son duo responsible for building some of Huntsville and Madison's most iconic turn-of-the-century buildings, including Harrison Brothers Hardware!

After exploring the exhibition, attendees perused its art section, coined "The Art of Alabama Clay." Indeed, what are bricks if not the less refined siblings of pottery and paints? Artists who contributed to this exhibit include John "Jahni" Moore, "the Artlady" Sonya Clemons, ClaybyLaura, Earthborn Studios, Christina Wegman, David Edwards, and Harold Turner. Their pieces provide a perfect throughline from the lives of the Brandons to the Huntsville of today!

HHF is grateful to the **City of Huntsville** and **Huntsville Utilities** for their financial support of "Brick by Brick: The Legacy of Henderson and Daniel Brandon."



Gary Whitley (of Huntsville Utilities) with textile artist and HHF board member Tiavalya Befecadu.



Huntsville City Council Member John Meredith with Probate Judge Frank Barger.



Huntsville City Council Member John Meredith with HHF board member Bart Siniard, Frances Ackridge, and others.

Press Conference Kicks Off "Brick by Brick" Exhibition





Ollye Conley addressing the audience at the "Brick by Brick" press conference.

On the morning of Friday, February 24th, the Historic Hunts-ville Foundation (HHF) held a press conference to officially kick off its 3rd Annual Rooted in History Exhibition "Brick by Brick: The Legacy of Henderson and Daniel Brandon." It was a joyous event, as a diverse crowd of elected officials, HHF board members, artists, and community members gathered at Harrison Brothers Hardware to welcome Henderson and Daniel Brandon to their place in history!

And in a full-circle moment, we had in attendance both a descendant of the Brandon family – Leah Brandon Hall – and a former owner of one of the Brandon buildings ¬– HHF member Roy Hutcheson, who previously owned 101 Washington St!

After opening words from HHF Chair Jerry Barclay, Mayor Tommy Battle greeted the crowd. The event also included remarks from HHF Executive Director Donna Castellano, local historian and educator Ollye Conley, and artist John "Jahni" Moore.



Mayor Tommy Battle welcomes attendees to the "Brick by Brick" press conference.



Painter John "Jahni" Moore chatting with Tena Payne of Earthborn Pottery.



Leah Brandon Hall, a descendant of the Brandon family, with HHF Executive Director Donna Castellano.



BRICK BY THE HENDERSON & DANIEL **BRANDON**



Daniel Brandon Photo Credit: Original courtesy of the HMCPL Library, digitally enhanced by Jim Teed.

Rooted in History

Brick by Brick: Constructing the History of Henderson and Daniel Brandon

On Friday, February 24 the Historic Huntsville Foundation formally debuted our latest installation in our Rooted in History series, "Brick by Brick: The Legacy of Henderson and Daniel Brandon." This exhibition shares the history of Henderson and Daniel Brandon, a father-son duo who established Huntsville's most successful Black-owned business in the decades following Reconstruction. Their masonry firm built some of Huntsville's most iconic buildings, including the Harrison Brothers building. "Brick by Brick" is the first exhibition showcasing the Brandons' work.

Brick by Brick showcases eleven structures built by the Brandons, three of which still stand. Those standing include the Baker-Helms Building at 101 Washington Street; the Humphrey Bros. Building at 112 Main Street in Madison; and the Harrison Brothers Building at 124 Southside Square. Among the Brandon buildings lost to history include the c. 1899 U.S. Courthouse and Post Office that once stood on Greene Street, the c. 1891 Dallas Textile Mill on Oakwood Drive

which burned in 1991, and the c. 1909 Church Street Cumberland Presbyterian Church, which was recently demolished.

We learned about Henderson and Daniel Brandon through Ellen Brandon, one of six Black suffragists HHF recognized with a historic marker in 2021. Our desire to learn more about Ellen led us to Daniel, her husband, and then to Henderson, Daniel's father. By piecing together newspaper articles, public documents, and scant primary source materials, we discovered how the Brandon family weathered the transition from Reconstruction to Jim Crow by building a business that provided economic independence for themselves and other Black families.

Henderson Brandon went from enslaved to entrepreneur using his skills as a brick mason. Henderson Brandon's was William Brandon, a prominent Huntsvillian who is credited with building many of our city's earliest structures. We know little about Henderson Brandon's life as an enslaved man, but Henderson Brandon's 1901 obituary states that



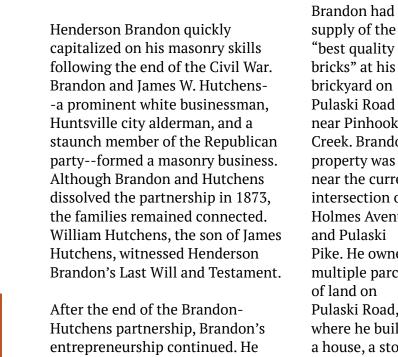
101 Washington Street



Harrison Brothers Hardware Photo credits: Jim Teed



Humphrey Bros. Building in Madison



he purchased his freedom from his

enslaver.

acquired a steam mill and began advertising that he could grind

corn and wheat. An 1880 ad in the Huntsville Gazette states that

Brandon had a supply of the "best quality near Pinhook Creek. Brandon's near the current intersection of Holmes Avenue Pike. He owned multiple parcels Pulaski Road, where he built a house, a store, and a mill.



Bricks! Bricks!!

We have on hand a large and full supply of freshly burnt bricks; also a kiln of new surface panel bricks the the best in the market. Prices the lowest. Call and see HENDERSON BRANDON & SON. Kiln on West end Holmes Street.

An 1886 ad for Henderson Brandon & Son.

Mr. D. S. Brandon, our popular contractor has the contract to rebuild the Harrison Bros. store on Commercial Row.

The Harrisons hired Daniel Brandon to expand their building following a 1901 fire on southside square.

Along with commercial structures, the Brandons provided the masonry for Huntsville's early public works projects, winning public contracts through a competitive bid system. They won city contracts to provide over 500,000 bricks for the city's first sewer system, to build a smokestack for the city's water system, and to construct the Huntsville Coal and Ice Factory.

Daniel joined the business in the 1880s to help his ailing father. Their business, Henderson Brandon & Son, quickly established a reputation for enterprise, efficiency and skill. It is likely Daniel's youth, education, and ambition opened new opportunities for the family business, whose projects transformed the city's skyline and laid the foundation for a modernizing Huntsville.

While Huntsville and Madison County have invested public and private funds to identify and document our historic buildings and structures, we have scant information about the craftsmen who constructed our historic buildings.

Combing through newspaper articles, principally the *Huntsville Gazette* and the *Journal*, two newspapers owned by Black publishers, HHF identified eleven structures built by Henderson Brandon & Son or by Daniel Brandon after his father's 1901 death. Until notified by Ms. Ollye Conley in 2022, HHF was unaware of our building's connection to Daniel Brandon.

Aside from the Harrison Brothers commission, it becomes harder to identify projects undertaken by Daniel Brandon after 1901, which is also the year of his father's death. Daniel Brandon built an addition to William Hooper Council School in 1908 and he constructed Cumberland Street Presbyterian Church in 1909.

Given the scarcity of available resources, it is impossible to identify a single cause for why his work may have slowed. It could be that changes in brick making techniques made it harder for Daniel to compete with larger, more efficient brick manufacturers. Given the racial attitudes of the time, it is possible white business owners began to favor white contractors. His success may have continued unabated, but his projects were not reported in white-owned newspapers.

The last known building constructed by Daniel Brandon is the Humphrey Bros. building at 112 Main Street in Madison. When forming their new business, brothers

William Binford Humphrey and James Hermon Humphrey commissioned Brandon to construct the building for their venture, W. B. Humphrey & Brother. Before the building's completion in 1919, Brandon placed a date stone on the building's exterior, which forever identifies the building as "Humphrey Bros." Immediately below is the inscription, "Build by D. S. Brandon." The master signed his work.



The artist signs his work

Since the February debut of "Brick by Brick," we have identified an additional Brandon building that is still standing and is beautifully preserved. We are working with the property owners on how to best recognize this structure. We are convinced that more of Daniel Brandon's work is in the greater Huntsville area just waiting to be discovered.

The Historic Huntsville Foundation is grateful to the **City of Huntsville** and **Huntsville Utilities** for their financial support of "Brick by Brick: The Legacy of Henderson and Daniel Brandon."



By: Laura Keigan

When we first saw Tiavalya Befecadu's "Alabama Authors" quilt, we knew her piece of art was destined for greatness. To help the quilt achieve its potential, Historic Huntsville Foundation board members (past and present) contributed funds so HHF could purchase the quilt and use it for community-engagement purposes. After collaborating with the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, "Alabama Authors" has the stage it deserves, bringing people together through literary and visual arts programs.

Crafted from vibrant fabrics – some sourced from the clothing of Tiavalya's beloved family members – the Gees Bend-inspired quilt contains the faces of six women writers from Alabama: Fannie Flagg, Yaa Gyasi, Zora Neale Hurston, Harper Lee, Sonia Sanchez, and Margaret Walker.

The HHF-HMCPL series kicked off in February with a "Meet the Artist" event featuring HHF board member and fiber artist Tiavalya Befecadu at the North Huntsville Public Library. Later talks featured experts in the fields of folk art and literature. The Madison Library hosted Dr. Elliott Knight, of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, who detailed the history of quilting in Alabama. At the Downtown Huntsville Library, Alabama A&M's Dr. Charlotte Teague explored the connected themes of the six Alabama women writers who appear on the quilt.

For individuals who prefer hands-on activities, the HMCPL hosted several workshops where participants created their own quilted potholders. On March 25th, quilters and local quilting organizations can attend the last event in the "Alabama Authors" series, a meetup at the South Huntsville Library



HHF board members attending the "Meet the Artist" event for textile artist and fellow HHF board member Tiavalya Befecadu. Picture here: Brenda Chunn, HHF Executive Director Donna Castellano, Becky Carstens, Dianne Reynolds, Tiavalya Befecadu, Olivia Reed, and U'Meeka Smith.

geared toward fostering shared knowledge and sparking connection.

After making the rounds at HMCPL branches, "Alabama Authors" will visit Burritt on the Mountain and then head up to Alabama A&M University. Follow HHF on Facebook for updates on programs!



Attendees of Tiavalya Befecadu's "Meet the Artist" talk coloring their own quilt squares for the library's Community Quilt Art Project.

> HHF Executive Director Donna Castellano, Dr. Charlotte Teague, Dr. Elliott Knight, textile artist/HHF board member Tiavalya Befecadu, and HHF board member Susan Markham at Dr. Knight's talk.



Lewter's Hardware: Preserving a Huntsville Tradition

Lewter's Hardware was our safe space. It was where we could take a home repair problem and walk out with a solution. While there, we could eat a handful of peanuts or pet two of the friendliest cats ever to grace the planet. We regret the loss of this store. Knowing the family as we do, we respect their decision to close their business.

The store is closed, but there is a component of the business that still exists through the ledgers, invoices, catalogs, and other documents that captured the daily activities of its operation. In November 2022, representatives from the Lewter family asked HHF for guidance on whether their business records had historic value. HHF Executive Director Donna Castellano said, "YES!"

HHF has firsthand experience with the need to be responsible stewards of business records from a historic store, as we faced a similar decision recording the ledgers and catalogues from Harrison Brothers Hardware. The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) Archives and Special Collections worked with us to create the Harrison Brothers Hardware Collection, where all the business records and other materials associated with the Harrisons' family business are preserved and digitally available to the public. Donna immediately called UAH Archives.

After meeting UAH archivists Reagan Grimsley and Drew Adan at Lewter's Hardware, Mac Lewter donated the business records of Lewter's Hardware to the UAH Archives. Mac viewed this donation as an important way he could preserve Lewter's Hardware and his family's legacy.



Mac Lewter



The business records of Lewter's Hardware.



Drew Adan, Reagan Grimsley, Mac Lewter and Donna Castellano hop on the hand-operated elevator in Lewter's Hardware.

You are the Foundation of Our Mission

HHF's historic marker programs, history exhibitions, and "Color Me, Huntsville" publications share Huntsville-Madison County history with local residents and visitors from around the world. Your membership and sponsorship contributions make this possible.

Our 2023 membership and sponsorship packages give you many ways to support our mission AND experience Huntsville-Madison County's historic places.

Our popular "Invitation to History" tours provide a private peek into historic places.

Olivia Reed of Olivia Reed Photography will lead a tour of the of the c. 1841 Mercury Building at 313 Franklin Street. Home of one of Huntsville's early newspapers, this building has become a creative hub for artists, photographers, and architects. Olivia's third-floor studio offers a gorgeous view of the city.

Sunday, April 30, 2023. Tours begin at 1:00 and proceed hourly.

We love the stories of historic buildings, but did you know that antique furnishings also have stories? Ken Rivenbark, owner of Rivenbark & Roper Antiques and a noted antiques expert, explains how materials, craftmanship, function, and cultural history combine in the creation of a gleaming sideboard or lustrous silver serving piece.

Sunday, September 17, 2023, 313 Jefferson Street.

Tours begin at 1:00 and proceed hourly.

Members who join or renew as a Patron (or above) will receive a Preserve Pottery dish designed and handcrafted exclusively for HHF members by ClaybyLaura.

Members who join or renew as a Benfactor will enjoy a complimentary reception and tour the c. 1848 Humphrey-Rogers House hosted by Stephanie Kennedy-Mell and Matthew Mell, founders of the ChurchStreet Family. The Humphrey-Rogers House is home to their restaurant, Mazzara's Vinoteca, and one of eight restaurants and bars in Huntsville and Madison founded by the Mells. HHF has a special connection to this house, as HHF founder and noted architectural historian Harvie Jones TWICE saved the house from demolition and is responsible for its current location in the EarlyWorks property.











Thank you Members!

Your membership support is the foundation of our community-based mission.

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124 Southside Square Huntsville, AL 35801

2023 Membership Levels & Benefits

Individual/Family Membership \$50

- Two "Invitation to History Tours."
- Invitation to exclusive personal shopping events in Harrison Brothers Hardware.
- 10% discount in Harrison Brothers Hardware, excluding sale & consignment.

Patron \$150 *All of the above, plus:*

• Preserve keepsake by ClaybyLaura.

Benefactor \$250 *All of the above, plus:*

• Listing on the HHF Donor Board in Harrison Brothers AND a complimentary Benefactor Reception at the historic Humphrey Rogers House.

Community Partner \$500 *All of the above, plus:*

• Name(s) listed on Color Me, Huntsville: Places Where Women Made History coloring books.

Preservation Partner \$1000 *All of the above, plus:*

• Recognition as a Preservation Partner at HHF exhibitions, events, and website.

Program Sponsor \$2,500 *All of the above, plus:*

• Recognition as a Program Sponsor at all HHF exhibitions, events, and website.

Exhibition Sponsor \$5,000 *All of the above, plus:*

• Recognition as a "Rooted in History" sponsor on posters and signage displayed in Harrison Brothers.

☐ I would like to renew my membership in the Historic Huntsville Foundation.

Membership Levels

Home Phone

☐ I would like to join the Historic Huntsville Foundation.				
☐ Individual/Family \$50				
☐ Patron \$150				
☐ Benefactor \$250	Make checks payable to: The Historic Huntsville Foundation			
☐ Community Partner \$500	Please send your dues to:			
☐ Preservation Society \$1000	The Historic Huntsville Foundation			
☐ Preservation Partner \$2,500	124 Southside Square			
T T 1 (D (05 000	Huntsville, AL 35801			



There are now THREE ways to join

or renew your membership in the Historic Huntsville Foundation!

1) Fill out the forms and mail

historichuntsville.org

3) Scan the QR code with your

in a check!

2) Join online at

smart phone!

☐ Preservation Partner \$2,500 ☐ Foundation Partner \$5,000	124 Southside Square Huntsville, AL 35801	JOIN ONLIN		
Name				
Address				
City	State	_ Zip		
Email				

Cell

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