



David's Web Wonder

Ormand Family Activity

May 2007: Trip to Huntsville

I was recently sent to my Second Favorite Town to run some TOW RF boards on the Redstone Arsenal Hardware-In-the-Loop (HIL) simulation. Usually, when I go to Huntsville, it is in the company of several other guys; when I'm on my own, I get to go where I want to go, and do what I want to do.

Woodland Hills Family

Since I'm on my own, and I can do what I want, and I've arrived Wednesday afternoon, I can visit my friends at Woodland Hills Baptist Church. I have a delightful visit with some Huntsville brothers and sisters, share some prayer concerns (for Element and the Youth Ministry here), and I get their picture:



Left to right, Front Row: Daryl Tacket, Pastor Gary Lawson, Jack Cahoon, Lanita Cahoon, Faye Wiley, Jeri Baines, Tracy Franklin, Christy Terrell.
 Second Row: Carol Wentz, Patsy Lawson, Carol Bruder, Sussanne Gibson, Debbie Nash, Ruth Hudson, Carolyn Clifford.
 Third Row: Ernest Stephens, Charles Smith, Nancy Childers, Gene Baines, Elizabeth Medlen, Peggy McMillan, Bill McMillan.

Downtown Huntsville

I am a connoisseur of city downtown areas. Part of this is living in a city with a marvelous downtown history and a hideous actual downtown. I have visited a few other cities, such as Ft. Collins, Colorado, where my sister lives, and they have a wonderful downtown area. Tucson wants to develop a nicer downtown, but the Democratic politicians on the City Council seem to be incapable of making sensible decisions. But anyways, when I visit a place, I like to check out its downtown. Huntsville has a very nice one. One of the most interesting things about Huntsville is, so many of its fine old buildings survived the Civil War.



This bank building was built in 1935, has housed several banks, and is occupied by a bank now. I don't know what else you could put in a bank building but a bank. No, there's a police substation in an former bank building on Tucson's east side.



Not everything is old. This is the Children's Memorial Fountain, which I suppose children can play in its jets. I'm guessing most children are in school today.



The site where Alabama's constitution was drafted is here in downtown Huntsville, in Constitution Village. This is the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) plaque.



And the official Alabama State Historical plaque.



The old Huntsville Inn. Now a lawyers' office.





The Church of Christ building; a relative newcomer.



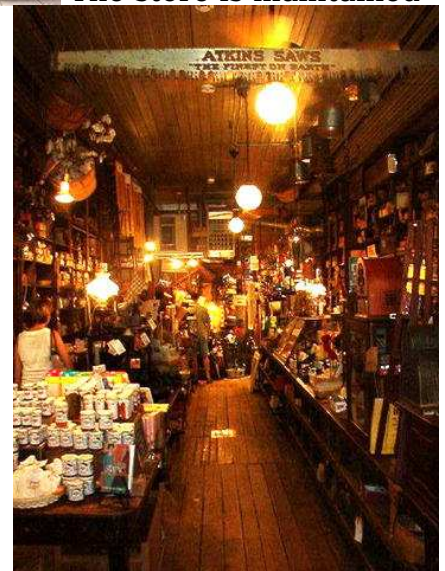
The Methodist Church





The Harrison Brothers hardware store is one of the most fun things in the downtown area. In the back is the desk used by the clerks, with some bank checks made out by the Harrison Brothers, and the store safe. You can buy fun things like candy cigarettes (where did you see *those* last?) and sleeping powders. The store is maintained

and operated by volunteers, which includes, as I was pleasantly surprised, one of my Woodland Hills Baptist friends!



A volunteer store clerk stands next to an antique NCR (National Cash Register, a company still in business) cash register that they actually use for cash sales!

The view down the street toward the Episcopal Church. Downtown here is centered around the Madison County Courthouse. Not far away, I saw an old boy in bib overalls and straw hat and a younger man in a three-piece suit walking into the Huntsville City Hall. I love it.



Spring Park

Downtown Huntsville is bi-level; the upper part is built over the artesian spring that is the original reason for Huntsville's existence. You can drive south down out of downtown and turn right along the Spring Park, or you can descend a beautiful stair right beside the bank building to the spring itself. I'm on my own, I can do what I want; I do both.



I believe the spring is still active, since water flows down to Spring Creek from it. They seem to have felt obligated to put a fountain out there in it.





Another plaque. The spring has been the center of town for many, many years. Still is! Maybe desert folk have a thing about water...



The water flows from the spring down this canal, which, according to the plaque, is in the same condition as when it was used for cotton boats (seems kinda narrow for that, but I'm ignorant). It proceeds under the street, through a field, under a Japanese ornamental bridge, and into a large pool.

There's a feed-the-ducks footpath around the pool. There's some families here for an outing (must be homeschoolers). Nice big fountain. The water flows out of the pool under a bridge carrying a car traffic street, and into another pool with a nice fountain next to the Von Braun Convention Center.

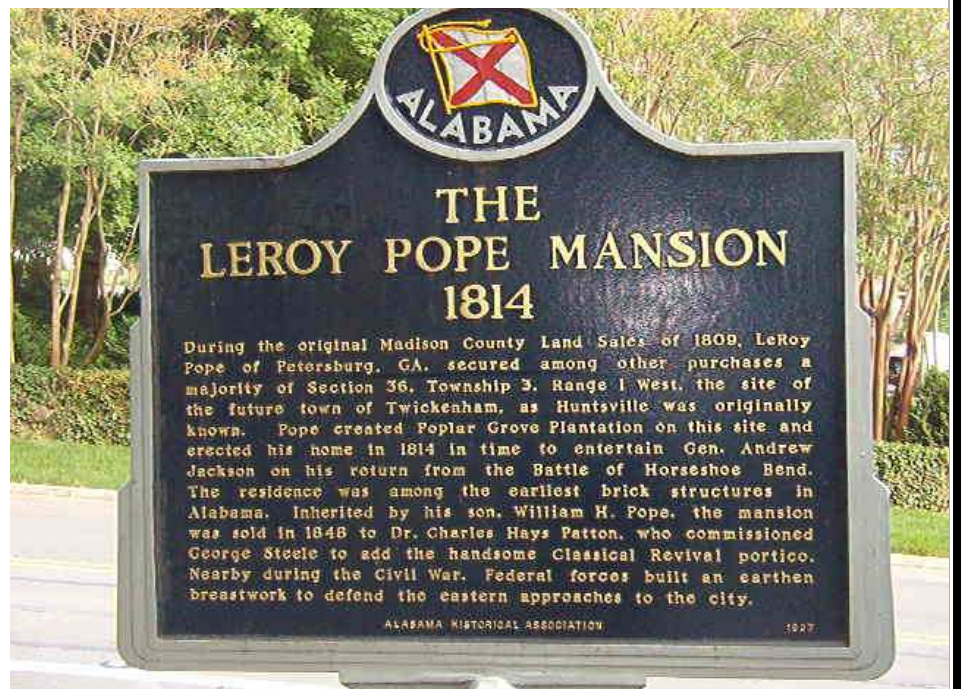


The water continues down a straight channel past some ritzy downtown hotels, and ends up dumping into Spring Creek, next to the railroad trestle. Real Huntsville (as opposed to cosmopolitan, ornamental Huntsville) starts now.

Twickenham

At the early part of the 19th century, Mr. Pope started an upscale residential area, which he named after the Dicken's fictional town of Twickenham. Eventually, the town would own the name "Huntsville", but the Twickenham district retains this original name. The area is covered with antebellum mansions, and - contra Tucson - are primarily residences, rather than lawyer offices.





Front porch and back porch views of the Pope mansion.



Another mansion, with gorgeous grounds, fountain and all.



Get a load of all that porch space. With circulating fans.



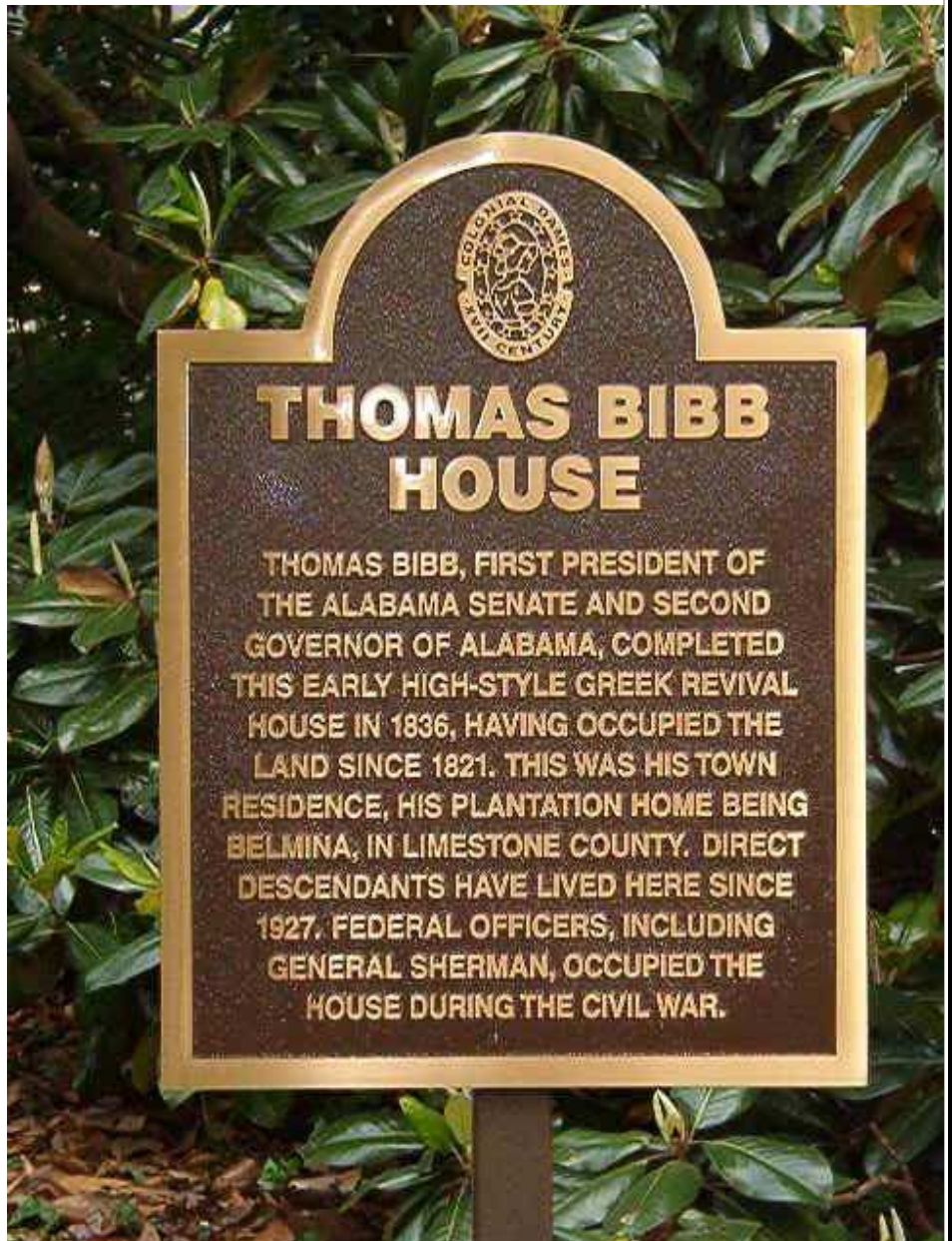
Wow. I believe there is a tour of some of the homes here; I'd love to see the inside of this one.



This one's for sale. Of course, they are all historical landmark buildings, so the usual restrictions of what and how you do maintenance apply. But they are *homes*!

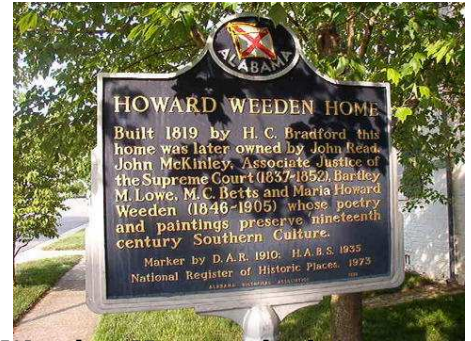


Thomas Bibb house. Occupied by family members (at least it was when the plaque was put up).





Magnificent!!!



One of the oldest houses is the Weeden Home, which is apparently famous more for one of the inhabitants.

For my children.
A huge magnolia
tree, and a long
swing in a tall
tree over green,
green grass.





On other trips, I've dragged some guys along to see downtown. They aren't as interested as I am, but this is a favourite, particularly the big porch with the hanging ferns and climbing vines.



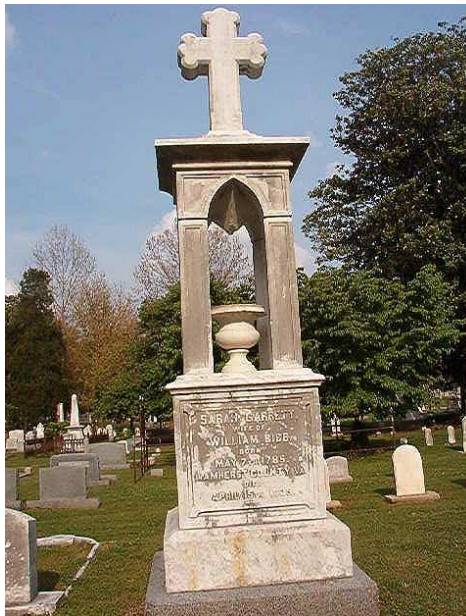
Two more beautiful big houses. In town. Another contra Tucson, where people capable of having large houses prefer not to be downtown, which is a pity, for even in Tucson, there are nice old houses downtown.

Maple Hill Cemetary

Okay, one more place. Not downtown, but not far away; up the hill from the city core, toward Mount Sano. The "upscale" cemetary, somewhat like our own Evergreen, and like our Evergreen, contains the remains of some of our prominent citizens. However, unlike anything in Tucson, Maple Hill was founded very early in the city's history and has remained. The original Tucson cemetary was, similarly, close to downtown, but was removed and built over as the city grew and people had no sense or care about the heritage. I don't know where the graves of those Tucson pioneers are now. Maybe nobody does.



There are some large funeral monuments in Evergreen, but nothing like this place. Especially the tall obelisk type things characteristic of the 19th Century.



Rather an ornate monument. Some money went into this one. But then, they were related to Thomas Bibb, of the mansion. Note: She was born within ten years of the Revolution, and she's buried here.



There are famous people buried here. Here's part of the Patton family. Look, lots of available space. Want to rub shoulders with Huntsville notables?



Governor Patton's grave



One Patton son died at Selma.

Another Patton
son died at
Shiloh.



Maple Hill is famous for the memorial to the Confederate war
dead buried here.



The fence is lined with markers of war dead. All the headstones say "Unknown". Here are memorials of the Wilcox brothers who served and died in the same Alabama infantry unit.

