



Member

**HHS Board Meeting**

**May 13 @ 10 AM**  
Public Safety Center

**HHS General Meeting**

**May 20th at 1 PM**  
Fitzgerald Room  
Hoover Public Lib.



# The Hoover Historical Log

*The Official Newsletter of the Hoover Historical Society, Hoover, Alabama*

## The Wetumpka Impact Crater:



Painting showing rebound and was in from SW rim/Internet image

## Alabama's Worst Natural Disaster

According to the Encyclopedia of Alabama, about 83-85 million years ago, a cosmic object estimated at 1,250 feet (or 380 meters) in diameter, struck the earth in (now) Elmore County, on the eastern side of the city of Wetumpka. The crescent-shaped crater remains clearly visible on US Highway 231 and AL Highway 14. Our May speaker, James Lowery, is on the Wetumpka Impact Crater Commission and assists with the annual guided tours of the crater. **See Page 2**



*James Lowery states, "This presentation will provide information about the Wetumpka Impact Crater located beside the Coosa River in central Alabama. Scientists estimate that the energy released during the explosion that created the crater was over 175,000 times the energy of the nuclear bomb detonated at Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945. Late Cretaceous dinosaurs and all living things out to a radius of many miles would have been killed almost instantly.*

*"The presentation also will include photographs of the crater as it appears today and information about how to see it when in the Wetumpka area."*

*Lowery is on the Wetumpka Impact Crater Commission and assists with the annual guided tours of the crater.*

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The crater structure was first noted in 1969 by a group of [geologists](#) from the [Geological Survey of Alabama](#), including team leader Thornton L. Neatherly. In 1976, Neatherly and his co-workers published a paper proposing that a meteor had created the feature, which they called the Wetumpka astrobleme. Its origin was not proven conclusively until 1999, when a team of scientists, including Neatherly and [Auburn University](#) geologist David T. King Jr., completed a 630-foot-deep drilling operation at the crater's center. The scientists found that the [minerals](#) contained in the subsurface samples revealed evidence of deformation characteristics resulting from high pressure and massive sudden impact. Such minerals are found only in structures formed by cosmic impacts and at nuclear-test sites. In addition to the physical analysis, the material was subjected to geochemical testing at a laboratory in Vienna, Austria, which revealed meteoritic elements such as iridium, cobalt, nickel, and chromium and confirmed their meteoric origin. In 2002, the research team published its results in *Earth and Planetary Science Letters* and officially established Wetumpka as the 157th known impact crater on Earth.\* **Our Meeting is May 20 at 1 PM in the Fitzgerald Room at the Hoover Public Library.**

\* Neatherly, T. L., D. T. King Jr., and L. W. Wolf, eds. *The Wetumpka Impact Structure and Related Features*. Montgomery, Ala.: Alabama Geological Society, 1997.

## Opelika hosts the Alabama Historical Association Annual Meeting

By Pam Thompson

It was my pleasure to attend the Annual Meeting of the Alabama Historical Association held at the Auburn Marriott at Opelika, on the Robert Trent Jones Trail. The opening reception was held at the Museum of East Alabama in historical Opelika downtown. This eclectic collection of local history items was a very interesting place to start to learn about this Early Alabama Railroad town. From Native American artifacts to military uniforms and Medal of Honor honorees, the history of the town is reflected in the barber shop, pioneer kitchen, Pepperell Mill weaving loom, historic fire truck and various vehicles it houses. And that is just a few examples of the collection!

It was my privilege to drive “Miss Louretta” Wimberly of Selma to the events. She participated in the Selma to Montgomery March and has continued to be an activist and asset to her community in Selma. At age 93, she drove herself from Selma to the meeting, caravanning with other members of the



**Miss Louretta and Steve Murray (ADAH) at the 2025 AHA Convention in Opelika.**

**Below, a country kitchen features a Hoosier.**



Thursday’s morning session included greeting from Mayor Gary Fuller—‘you gotta LIKA Opelika in case you don’t remember how to pronounce it.’ Keynote speaker Bert Harris of the Museum of East Alabama, gave an interesting history of the city. An article in the AHA Spring 2025 newsletter contains most of the information he covered—it can be downloaded from the Website [alabamahistory.net](http://alabamahistory.net).

A variety of talks were offered in the breakout sessions. Topics included The Mancini Family: Italian Immigrants in Daphne, Alabama; Community Activists who stopped ocean incinerations of toxic chemicals in the Gulf of Mexico; Curb Markets: Economic Opportunities for Rural Women in East Alabama 1914-1930; and How the TVA Reforested Northern Alabama, and many others.

Two sessions of special interests to me and our area were Sulphur Wells, Chalybeate Springs and Mountaintop Spas by Annette Bradford of the Jackson County Historical Society reminded me of Hale Springs. She explained the popularity of such places during the late 1800s until the late 1920s was due to influence of the Wellness Movement and the belief in the health benefits they offered. Malaria and Tuberculosis claimed many lives in this time before treatments existed. Their passing

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## AHA Presentations

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was a result of the availability of clean water, medical advances, and air conditioning which made the spas less desirable. Such retreats for those who could afford them existed all over the Southeast.

Another session was Faith Based Responses to the AIDS Epidemic in 1980s-1990s by Morgan Newquist of UAH. Most of her research centered on the AIDS Care Teams at the UAB 1971 Clinic in Birmingham. Since I was on one of the care teams, I lived the history she had discovered.

Louretta and I, along with Josephine McCall, toured historic sites around Opelika on Thursday. We visited an old hardware store where the owner gave us glass Coca-Cola bottles, and the home of Dr. John Wesley Darden, the first African American physician to treat patients in the Opelika area. The Darden House was restored by alumni of the J.W. Darden High School and is on the National Registry of Historic Places and continues to be used as the J.W. Darden Wellness Center, a free clinic and social services agency.

We also visited Emmanuel Episcopal Church, which dates to 1887. As early as 1857, scattered settlers came together for worship. There were few Episcopalians at that time as association with the Church of England was a cause for prejudice against them. They began to raise money for their building, but the Civil War hindered their progress. They decided to build a strong church using stones from the North Opelika Nelson Plantation. By 1888, they worshipped in the building which is much the same today as it was then.

When we entered with a group of AHA attendees, we were greeted by a Deacon who turned out to be an acquaintance from my women's club organization. The next person who greeted me as the wife of my son's college roommate. I sensed something special was in store. After a few minutes The Rev. Dr. Larry Williams, asked us to pose for a picture for their newsletter. Once assembled, he told us the story of Josephine McCall's father who was lynched when she was five years old on Hwy 80, the road from Selma to Montgomery. When she had an historical marker erected at the spot, she met Brian Stephenson of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery. She believes her story inspired him to create the National Memorial for Peace & Justice. The priest was so moved at hearing this because he had just visited the memorial and shared the experience with us. This disparate group of strangers, gathered at this moment, shared a holy moment as he led us in prayer. Yes, God was with us at Emmanuel Episcopal Church!



Louretta Wimberly  
and Josephine  
McCall at  
Emmanuel  
Episcopal Church

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## Grants awarded to graduating seniors

The Hoover Historical Society, along with sponsors Carlo & Dianne Joseph and Signature Homes' Jonathan Belcher, awarded \$1,000 grants to Emily Wilson (far right) and Olivia Guenster (left). Olivia's essay was entitled *Traditional Education vs. Online Education: Advantages and Disadvantages* while Emily discussed *Cursive Writing: The History and Importance of This Lost Art*.



Olivia Guenster (above) attends Hoover High School and Emily Wilson (right) is a student at Spain Park High School. Congrats!

## Political memorabilia delights group

Regardless of your political learning, history can be intriguing, especially if you lived through it. The Hoover Historical Society toured the Archives and Capitol, but also had the opportunity to see a truly unique collection of Alabama political memorabilia. David Azbell, with his extensive career as a political advisor, speechwriter, and communications advisor, has spent over four decades amassing an impressive collection of Alabama political memorabilia. Beginning with the discovery of his father's box of political buttons, Azbell's collection has grown to include a vast array of items such as posters, letters, furniture, and even flags. His collection, which he believes to be the largest private collection of its kind, has outgrown several spaces and now resides in a 1910-era house near the Capitol.



The collection not only preserves the historical artifacts but also tells the stories behind them. His favorite items range from a campaign ticket for George Wallace's fundraiser on the day Wallace was shot to a papal medal given to Wallace by Pope John Paul II. Each piece in his collection has its own unique narrative, reflecting the diverse and sometimes controversial history of Alabama politics. Notably some items such as campaign undergarments and lye soap bars highlight the quirky and sometimes tasteless aspects of political campaigns. His dedication to preserving political history is evident in his efforts to share the collection with others. His aim is to educate people, particularly younger generations, about Alabama's political past, emphasizing the importance of understanding history to avoid repeating its mistakes. Through his labor of love, Azbell ensures that the rich and varied tales of Alabama politics are not forgotten.

— **Jim Langley**



**HOOVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Membership Form**

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<p>INTERESTS: Archives/Historical Research ____ Folklore Center Volunteer ____ Other ____</p> <p>SKILLS: Computer ____ Fundraising ____ Publicity ____ Leadership ____</p> <p>SPEAKERS/PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS: _____</p>
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*The Hoover Historical Society*

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