

Southeast Limestone's history shared on markers

By Rebekah Davis

Limestone County Archivist

It's time for more stops on the historical marker tour of Limestone County, hitting 25 markers in all.

I'm spending a few weeks sharing the information about these markers. If you want to go ahead and check them all out, you can get maps and GPS coordinates to each one by searching for Limestone County's historical markers on www.lat34north.com.

Today's markers are:

- **Belle Mina/Woodside:**

Belle Mina – Thomas Bibb built this grand house in 1826 and named it Belle Manor – beautiful home – but local pronunciation altered it to Belle Mina. The home which stayed in the Bibb family until 1940 was the seat of Bibb's large plantation and furnished the name of the small town nearby. The town of Belle Mina developed around a railroad station intended for the nearby town of Mooresville, the residents of which didn't want it built too close to their homes and business.

While serving as president of the Alabama senate. Thomas Bibb ascended to the office of Governor when his brother William Wyatt Bibb, then holding that office was accidentally killed in a fall from his horse. William Wyatt Bibb had been Governor of Alabama Territory 1817~1819 and when statehood was granted he became the first Governor of the state of Alabama.

Woodside – Another grand house of the Bibb family is located a short distance to the NE across the field. It was built 1860-61 by Thomas son Porter Bibb as a wedding present for his daughter, Mary C who married William F Eggleston.

The Bibb plantation was but one of many in this area. At the federal land sale held at Huntsville in 1818 wealthy planters from Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia bought large tracts of land and established plantations here. The terrain and soil here were ideally suited for cotton, the crop that created great wealth. Many brought their household goods, farming gear, and slaves here to begin anew. The grand houses they built, the rows of slave cabins, and cotton growing for miles around gave this area the look of Plantation Alley. Belle Mina and Woodside are privately owned and are not open to the public. Marker on Mooresville Road, Belle Mina.

- **Cottonport/Mooresville:**

Cottonport – The town of Cottonport flourished in the early years of Limestone County. It was settled in 1818 and chartered in 1824. It was located approx. 1½ miles S.E. near the point where Limestone Creek flowed into the Tennessee River and was a prime boat landing. Steamboats from E. Tennessee brought much needed goods to this area. During high water, flatboats loaded with bales of cotton departing Cottonport, could cross the river's rocky shoals and float to New Orleans.

Cottonport, once boasting a town square, handsome houses, brick stores, warehouses, and a racetrack, gradually ceased to exist.

Residents left, fleeing malaria epidemics common to the location. By the 1850's no trace of it remained. The long forgotten town cemetery was unearthed by construction of I-65.

Mooresville – Incorporated November 16, 1818.

This quiet village was once a bustling town with doctors, lawyers, business houses,

craftsmen and shops, including a tailor shop where a future president, Andrew Johnson apprenticed for a time. Named for an early settler, Mooresville was the first town incorporated by the Alabama Territorial Legislature.

The buildings exhibit the various architectural styles of the 19th century. The 1840's Post Office is the oldest in continual use in Alabama. There are town churches, the 1839 Brick Union Church and the 1854 white frame church where a future president James Garfield once preached a sermon. The stagecoach inn and tavern dates to the 1820's.

The Disney movie Tom and Huck was filmed here in 1995.

Marker at the intersection of Old Highway 20 and Mooresville Road, Mooresville.

About the Archives:

Limestone County Department of History and Archives

Established: 1980

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